ABERCROMBIE
ON THE
CHRISTIAN CHARACTER
AND THE
CULTURE AND DISCIPLINE
OF
THE MIND.

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THE

HARMONY OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

AND

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER;

AND THE

CULTURE AND DISCIPLINE

OF

THE MIND.

BY

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TO

THE AMERICAN EDITION.

The publishers take great pleasure in presenting to the American public a third work from the pen of Doctor Abercrombie. His works on the "Intellectual Powers" and on the "Moral Feelings," published as numbers thirty-seven and fifty-eight of the Family Library, have enjoyed unprecedented popularity with the reading public, and have been introduced as text-books into many of the most respectable literary institutions of our country. The present, which is a work of intrinsic merit, will meet, we cannot doubt, with a reception equally favourable.

H. & B.

New-York, January, 1839.

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THE

HARMONY OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

AND

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

TO THE INDUSTRIOUS CLASSES.

You have lately been addressed on a variety of subjects, and by a great variety of individuals, all of whom profess to feel an interest in your welfare. He who now claims your attention will yield to none of them in the deep interest which he takes in you, or in the anxious desire which he feels to contribute anything in his power towards promoting your comfort and bettering your condition. He has been long in habits of much intercourse with you, and has learned to know your wants, to enter into your feelings, and to estimate your character. He is now desirous to cultivate that intercourse more and more, and to communicate with you, from time to time, on subjects of the highest interest

There was a period in the history of this country, now nearly two hundred years ago, when political contests ran very high, and even the pulpits were often made to give forth the sounds of political strife. It is related of a distinguished clergyman of that day, that he was found fault with by his friends for "not preaching to

the times." He replied in terms which carry with them a weight of meaning worthy of the most deep and serious attention, "When so many brethren," said he, "are preaching to the times, will you not allow one poor brother to preach to eternity?"

For some years past this country has resounded from end to end with discussions and contests which relate to "the times." You of the industrious classes have had your attention much occupied, shall I say distracted, with these discussions; and each new topic, as it was brought before you, was represented as carrying with it consequences and benefits of the highest importance to your prosperity and your comfort. Some experiments have consequently been made, and you are, in a measure, qualified to judge whether they have answered your expectations or fulfilled the promises which were made respecting them. Others are still proposed with equal confidence; what benefits may result from them, time will show.

But, amid all this discussion on "the times," has it never occurred to you that life is passing quickly on, and will very soon be over; that a period is approaching with fearful rapidity,

when, regarding each of us, "time shall be no longer?" Has it never occurred to you to think, with deep and personal interest, of that hour when all that our best friends can do for us will be to convey us, with suitable decency, to the grave, to cover us with the green turf, and then to return to the tumult of life with the same activity and interest as if we had never been? To them the face of nature shall bloom fresh and fair as it bloomed before; and the full tide of life shall flow on as it flowed before; and some pageant shall again move on, and a busy crowd shall follow it with looks of wonder and shouts of applause, till another and another of them shall drop into the grave, and life, with all its dread responsibilities, shall close upon them for ever.

For life has dread responsibilities when viewed in relation to a life which is to come. Whatever be our situation in this world; be it high or low; be it one of ease and affluence, or of labour, poverty, and suffering, it is the one which has been assigned to us by the great Disposer of all things; and every rank and situation has attached to it peculiar duties and peculiar responsibilities, for which we must render a strict

account to Him at the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and every man shall be judged according to his works. Amid the bustle and the tumult of life we are too apt to frame to ourselves excuses for violations of the laws of God, and for the neglect of sacred and important duties; such excuses may satisfy our fellow-men, but the solemn question is whether they will satisfy Him whose law is holy and whose justice is inflexible. Were such excuses admitted for the violation of human laws, the whole system of civil society would run into confusion and anarchy. Have we any ground for believing that the moral government of God will be exercised in a manner which, in regard to human laws, would be reckoned a mockery of justice?

But, besides the actual obedience which we owe to the laws of God, and the actual duties which pertain to our various relations to our fellow-men, there is a most solemn class of responsibilities which belong immediately to ourselves. There is a part within us which shall not die; an immortal spirit, which must be eternally happy in the presence and enjoyment of God, or eternally miserable under the weight of

his righteous displeasure. To every man is committed the solemn trust of seeking to have this immortal being prepared for its appearance before God. It must be the subject of great, and careful, and anxious moral culture in each man who is really alive to his high destinies as a moral and immortal being. This culture consists of a discipline within, open only to the eye of Him who seeth in secret. By his mercy and his grace, indeed, ample means have been provided, and the all-powerful aid of his Holy Spirit is promised to every one who feels the need of a strength that is not in man; but an essential movement must be in the mind of the individual himself, leading him to the diligent use of these means, and the earnest and habitual application for this aid; and, in the whole of this mighty undertaking, the great and solemn responsibility is his own.

With these facts and considerations continually placed before us and impressed upon our attention, it cannot but strike us as a matter of astonishment that the bulk of mankind seem so little to feel their importance. Engrossed by the cares, anxieties, and business of life, or occupied by its frivolities and follies, year after year pass-

es over them, and life hastens to its close, while their eager and undivided attention is devoted to pursuits which they are soon to leave for ever. Thus old age, perhaps, creeps on, and the mind, so long unaccustomed to serious thought, continues to be occupied to the last with the concerns of the passing hour; or acute disease, it may be, arrests the man in the midst of all the vigour and activity of life, and the truth bursts upon him in a moment that he is hurrying into an eternal world, while he has made no preparation for the wondrous change, and has scarcely devoted one serious thought to the fearful venture.

There cannot be a question of more intense interest than what is the cause of this extraordinary and inconsistent conduct. It is simply and primarily to be ascribed to the want of calm and serious thought. Amid the occupations and tumult of life, men do not seriously question themselves what they are, and what they are doing, and whither they are going, and what preparation they are making for the life which is to come. There is nothing which makes so great a difference between one man and another as the practice of calm and serious thinking.

To those who have been unaccustomed to it, there is required at first an effort, but it is entirely in their own power to repeat this effort if they will and when they will. It becomes every day easier by perseverance and habit; and the habit so acquired exerts a material influence upon their condition as responsible and immortal beings.

In that great process, therefore, in which consists the healthy condition of any man as a moral being, there is a most important step, of which he must be conscious as an exercise of his own mind. You feel that you have here a power, however little you may attend to the exercise of it. You can direct your thoughts to any subject you please; you can confine them to objects which are before you at the time, or occurrences which have passed during the day, or you can send them back to events which took place many years ago. You can direct them to persons whom you are in the habit of meeting from day to day, or to those who are separated from you by thousands of miles. You can place before you persons who lived, and events which occurred long before you came into existence, and you can anticipate and realize events which

are not likely to occur until you have ceased to exist.

Study these wondrous processes of your mind; observe what power you have over them, and what consequences of eternal importance must arise from exercising them aright. If you can thus think of any subject you please, why cannot you think of God; of his power, his wisdom, his holiness, his justice; of his law, which he has written in your heart and in his revealed word? Why cannot you think of and realize the period when you shall lie down in the grave, and that tremendous moment when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live and shall arise to judgment? Such truths as these, duly considered or thought of, could not fail, under Divine influence, to exercise a powerful effect upon all our habits of thinking and acting in this life. To think of and consider them is a process of the mind which it is the imperative duty of every rational being to perform; if we neglect it, the guilt, with all its fearful consequences, is entirely our own.

Cultivate, then, this important power of thinking of "things which are not seen," and conse-

quences of inconceivable moment will result from it both to your happiness and your moral condition, and to your whole habits of feeling and judging respecting the things of this life and of the life which is to come. Retire often from the tumult of the world, and seriously propose to yourself the questions, What are my leading objects in this life, which is hastening to a close, and what provision am I making for that life which is never to end? In the exercise of that power which I possess of thinking of whatever I please, what are the subjects which chiefly occupy my thoughts, what degree of thought am I directing to God and to his law, and to that account which I am soon to render to him? In what degree is my conduct regulated by a sense of his presence and by the authority of his will? To what extent do I make his word the rule of my life, and look to it habitually as the light of my feet and the lamp of my paths? Am I discharging the various duties which belong to the situation in which I am placed in a manner which will bear the dread investigation of that day when I must give an account of myself to God? Am I a parent, have I intrusted to me the sacred charge of beings who, like

myself, are destined to an eternal existence; what attention am I devoting to the solemn responsibility of training them for immortality? Let me review my whole course of life, my whole habits of thinking, and the objects and pursuits which chiefly occupy my thoughts and engage my active exertions, and say, am I living for time, or am I living for eternity?

It is such a course of inquiry as this that determines a man's moral condition. He may read many books and hear many sermons; he may become well acquainted with doctrines, and learn to argue acutely on points of faith; but, whatever progress he has made in the knowledge of truth, the great business of life is yet to begin, till he seriously enters on the mental exercise of applying it in this manner to his own condition in the sight of God, who searches his heart, and who perceives, at a single glance, the whole details of his moral history. It is an exercise which may require little expense of time; in the most laborious and busy life, leisure will be found for it when there exists a due impression of its supreme importance. When the exercise has grown into a habit, it will mingle itself with the daily concerns of life, and will

shed a directing and enlightening influence over them all, producing an habitual sense of the Divine presence, and a uniform reliance on Divine direction and aid in every action of life. It was thus that the King of Israel "remembered God upon his bed, and meditated on him in the night watches," and his earnest desire above all earthly things was that he might "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple;" that is, to live under a constant sense of the presence of God, to contemplate his character and perfections, and to seek the direction of the Almighty in all his ways.

The mind which has been disciplined to this habit of exalted thought will never be in want of subjects on which it may be exercised. In the works of creation, above, and beneath, and within, it will trace with wonder the wisdom and the power of Him who made them all. In the ways of Providence it will trace the daily working of his hand, and will learn to cast itself, with filial confidence, on the disposal of him who rules among the children of men. In the word of God, it contemplates him in new and wondrous characters, at once of justice and

of mercy, and it finds there a subject of thought which, the more frequently and more closely it is studied, presents features of new and increasing interest. Taken in its more enlarged connexions, it affords a study for the most profound reasoner, while its shortest passages often contain a weight of meaning accessible to the most ordinary understanding, and adapted to every relation of life. We ought, therefore, to read diligently the word of God, and to cultivate the habit of directing our thoughts to the important lessons which may be drawn from it. This is a mental exercise highly interesting in itself, and productive of the best effects both on the tranquillity of our minds and the regulation of our conduct. It should be accompanied by earnest prayer for the influence of the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds in the knowledge of the truth, and to impress it upon our hearts in such a manner that it may become the regulating principle of our whole character.

The habit of calm and serious thought, which has been the subject of these observations, may become the prevailing or habitual exercise of a duly regulated mind. But there are special seasons of retirement and reflection which are pe-

culiarly favourable to it, and specially intended for its cultivation. Among these we may reckon the seasons of private and domestic devotion, and the sacred rest of the Sabbath, that wondrous provision of Divine wisdom and mercy for withdrawing us from the concerns of time, and leading our thoughts to the things of eternity. We are too apt to lose sight of the real design and supreme importance of the Sabbath. We are too much disposed to consider the observance of it merely as a certain duty to be performed, and not to feel aright its unspeakable value, as a period given us for sacred thought, as a means of moral culture. Learn, then, to value the Sabbath; esteem its exercises as the food of the soul; as that which is intended to nourish you unto eternal life. To those who are laboriously occupied on other days, there is something peculiarly and solemnly valuable in the evening of the Sabbath. You are not fatigued as on other evenings with the necessary labours of the day; you have attended public ministrations of religion, which must have left some impression upon your mind of the things which relate to your everlasting peace. Then is the time to retreat from all in-

trusion, to shut your door, to gather your family around you, and to contemplate yourself and them as passing through a scene of moral discipline to an eternal existence. Lose not the benefit of the precious moments; take your children to your side; fold them in the arms of parental affection; and talk to them of that God who has appointed them their lot in this world, and from whose all-seeing eye nothing can hide them for a moment. Talk to them of their high destiny as immortal beings, and of the great provision which is made in the Gospel of Christ for the nourishment and growth of the soul. Talk to them of this life which is hastening to a close, and of that eternal life which is never to end; and point out to them, from the word of God, the way to eternal peace. Gather them around you, and kneel before the throne of God; seek his mercy and his grace; commit yourself and them to his guidance through life, and to the power of the Holy Spirit to prepare and purify you for the life which is to come. Thus shall you return to the labours, the cares, and the uncertainties of the world, with the high bearing of one who is pursuing a better portion than aught that the world can

give. Thus shall your habitation be the abode of happiness, of peace, and of love. Thus shall your children rise up to call you blessed. They shall go out from their father's house with impressions upon their minds of "things which are eternal;" impressions calculated, by the blessing of God, to preserve them from the evil that is in the world, and to lead them through the labours and anxieties of life as heirs of immortality.

HARMONY

OF

CHRISTIAN FAITH

AND

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

"And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity."—2 PETER i., 5, 6, 7.

IN the style and composition of the Sacred Writings, nothing is more remarkable than the manner in which, by a few simple expressions, there is laid before us a detailed and harmonious display of Christian faith and Christian character. In such expositions, each single word is often found to be a clear and distinct subject of contemplation in itself, while the combination is arranged with such consummate skill, yet simplicity and clearness, that it becomes at once a study for the philosopher in moral science, and

a guide to the most humble Christian in his daily conduct through life. A beautiful example of this nature is furnished by the passage which we have placed at the head of this essay; and, in its connexion with the observations which go before it, taken along with the peculiar relation of its own component parts, it displays the foundation of Christian hope, and affords a delineation of Christian character in a manner the most harmonious and comprehensive.

This striking exhortation is addressed to those who profess to have received the truth respecting the divine character and atonement of the Messiah, and to rest their hope, in the sight of God, on that great revelation of his mercy and grace which is contained in the gospel of peace. The apostle expresses to them his earnest desire that they may grow in grace and in peace, founded upon the knowledge which they receive in the gospel of the character of God as it is displayed in his Son; and he strikingly calls their attention to the provisions which are therein held out to them, so adapted to all their spiritual necessities. He reminds them that God has himself provided for them in the Gospel all that is required for their spiritual life and for their

sanctification to his service; while he has enriched this message of mercy with "great and precious promises," calculated to bring them into a state of conformity to the nature of God, and to preserve them from the evil that is in the world through the degradation of the moral nature of man.

Having thus laid before them the ground of their hope in the sight of God and the means provided for their progress in the Divine life, he goes on to impress upon their attention those qualities of individual character which every one who is resting his hope upon this foundation is called upon to cultivate with the most anxious care, as his great concern in his passage through this scene of moral discipline. He is required to "give all diligence" in this great work; implying that, in the cultivation of this character, there is something to be done by an exercise of the mind itself. This is a truth which we are too apt to lose sight of, while under a profession of our own weakness we acknowledge our need of Divine aid, but sit still in indolence and await its coming. True it is, indeed, that without this aid we can do nothing; but it is not an impression which a man may

imagine that he feels, and then content himself with the ideal communication. It is a power which acts through the healthy operations of his own mind ; in the exercise of these, endeavouring, as a rational being, to regulate his thoughts and desires by a sense of the Divine will, he is encouraged to expect its communication ; and it is in feeling these assuming the characters of moral health that he has the evidence of its actual presence. " Give all diligence," therefore, says the apostle, in the cultivation of those qualities of character which are the only evidence to yourselves or to others that you are really interested in the gospel of peace. " Give diligence," he says again, " to make your calling and election sure." " Work out your own salvation," says another apostle, " with fear and trembling," having before you the encouragement of a strength and a might that is not in man to carry you forward in the great undertaking, " for God worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure."

A great and important truth, which is clearly pointed out in such exhortations, is, that we have a certain power, not only over our conduct, but over the processes of our minds and the regu-

lation of our thoughts; and that, in the diligent exercise of this power, and a state of mental discipline arising out of it, we are encouraged to look for an influence from God to enlighten our darkness, to give strength in our weakness, and to make us "more than conquerors" over all the difficulties and dangers which are before us in our progress to an eternal world. The subject is one of deep and extensive interest; the various important points of consideration which arise out of it could not be expressed in a more striking manner than in the exhortation of the apostle, "Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity."

In attempting a brief illustration of a subject of such extent and importance, the first object of attention which meets us is, that, in all this exhibition of moral qualities, the primary and fundamental principle is *faith*. This is at once the source of spiritual life and the supporting element of moral health; and, until a man be

firmly established in this great principle, it is vain for him to expect to make any progress in the cultivation of Christian character. When we thus consider faith as the source or primary moving cause, essential to the culture of every sound quality of the mind and to every regulation of individual conduct, we have to view it in two aspects: in its relation to truths regarding things not seen, and more especially and peculiarly in its relation to the offers or promises of the gospel of peace.

In considering the operation of faith in regard to the truths which relate to things not seen, we have to keep in mind the peculiarity of the situation in which we are placed in the present state of existence. In our connexion with the things of the present world we are surrounded by physical or material objects; with these we communicate by means of our bodily senses; they are continually obtruding themselves upon our attention with little or no exertion of our own, and therefore they exercise over us a constant and extensive influence. But these are not our only relations; as moral and responsible agents, as immortal beings, we have to do with objects as real as those which are present-

ed to our senses, though of a very different nature. The truths by which we ought to be influenced respecting them are addressed to a different part of our constitution, and are to be received upon a separate kind of evidence. They do not come under the cognizance of any of our senses, but are addressed directly to the mind; and their due influence upon us is produced through that mental process which we call faith. In the exercise of this important operation of the mind, our first object is, by a process of judgment, to satisfy ourselves of the authenticity of the statements which are thus addressed to us; and this we do by an examination of the evidence on which they rest. When we are thus convinced of their truth, the farther operation of faith is to place them before us in such a manner that they may exert the same kind of influence over us as if the things believed were actually seen, or the events expected were taking place in our view. This corresponds with the definition given by the apostle: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" that is, faith is that exercise of the mind by which things which are future, but expected to take place, influence

us as if they were present; and things not seen as if we saw them.

The truths which it is the office of faith thus to place before us with all the vividness of present existence are those which relate to the character and perfections of God; the great concerns of a world unseen, and the awful realities of a future judgment, and a state of endless being. When these overwhelming truths are really believed, and the thoughts are consequently directed to them in a degree at all proportioned to their momentous importance, the mind is in the exercise of faith; and its operation is to keep the truths before us as regulating principles in the mental economy, and governing principles in the whole character and conduct. It causes them to exercise the same kind of influence over us as if they were objects of sense; as if the Deity, in all the splendour of his attributes, were disclosed to our view, or as if we were present at the dread hour in which he shall appear in all his sublime and terrible majesty as a righteous judge.

Now in this important process of the mind it is impossible not to be struck with the consideration of how much appears to belong to

ourselves in the exercise of our powers as rational beings. The truths are revealed, and their evidence is before us; but the due attention to them must be entirely our own. It is ours to examine the evidence by which these important truths are supported; and, being satisfied of their reality, it is an exercise of our own minds to direct our thoughts to them in such a manner, or to keep them so before the mind, that they may exert their due influence over our whole character. The man who, in every action of life, thus bears upon his mind an habitual sense of the Divine presence and a realizing impression of an eternal world, is he who lives by faith. Such a character is strikingly contrasted with the conduct of those who live by sense; who are influenced only by the things which they see around them, and devote their supreme attention to objects and pursuits which they are soon to leave for ever.

Such is the operation of faith in regard to truth; we have next to attend to its agency respecting the offers or promises of the Gospel. This great revelation of peace is addressed to us as beings in a state of condemnation and of impurity from which we have no power to de-

liver ourselves. For the one it reveals a dispensation of mercy, in which, with perfect consistency with all the attributes of his character, the Deity offers a free forgiveness; for the other is promised an influence from himself capable of renewing the moral nature of man, and of raising him again to the image of God. The benefits thus freely promised are offered to every one who believes; and who is he that believes? he who is convinced of his guilt, and perceives his moral necessities; who feels that he is incapable of delivering himself from their power; who is satisfied of the efficacy of the offered deliverance, and confides in the faithfulness or sincerity of Him who offers it; this is he who believes; and through this faith a man is saved; for, acting upon the impression of the truths thus believed, he asks an interest in these offered blessings, and throws himself upon the faithfulness of God for a participation in the full benefits of redemption.

When, under the influence of the mental impressions which have been thus briefly referred to, a man has been led to seek an interest in the provisions of the Gospel, he enters upon a new course of existence, the leading character

of which is, that it is founded upon and maintained by faith. Believing his guilt, and confiding in the sincerity of God in a free offer of pardon, he seeks an interest in the blessings of redemption for his reconciliation to God. Believing his moral depravity and helplessness, he seeks continued communications of grace and strength for his growing sanctification and his progressive advancement in the Divine life. Believing the actual existence of things future and things unseen, he feels upon his mind their habitual influence, the presence and the perfections of God, and all the realities of an eternal world. Thus he both lives and walks by faith; his faith is the source of his spiritual life, and it is the great mean of his daily progress.

It is to those who profess to have entered upon this life of faith that the striking exhortation of the apostle is addressed; pointing out to them at once the graces of the Christian character which they are called upon to cultivate with "all diligence," and the means by which they may be enabled to advance with success in this great undertaking.

I. He exhorts them, in the first place, Add to your faith *Virtue*.

The word which is usually translated virtue is well known to imply, in its original and strict signification, fortitude. In its connexion in this passage it appears to mean simply a firmness and consistency of mind in reference to the truths which are the objects of faith, a determination to contemplate them steadily in all their tendencies, and an habitual effort to keep them before the mind, so that they may become regulating principles in the whole conduct. It includes, therefore, an earnest endeavour to cultivate that character and conduct which the truths so believed are calculated to produce in every one who really believes them. This is the first great step in that mental exercise which constitutes living by faith; and it cannot be too strongly impressed upon us how much it is a process of the mind, of which every one must be conscious who really performs it. From the want of it we see such inconsistencies of character in those who profess to believe the most important truths and who think they believe them. They have, it may be, directed some attention to the evidence of the truths, and have yielded a certain assent of the understanding to their reality, but this conviction has not been followed

up by that necessary process of the mind which is calculated to bring the truths into practical operation upon the moral condition; they have neglected entirely the exhortation to add to their faith virtue.

This important exercise of the mind must be in habitual and active operation in him who desires to live by faith. The things of time and sense with which we are continually surrounded exert over us a constant influence; and it requires a peculiar and intense direction of the mind to withdraw us from their power, and to cause us to feel as we ought the influence of events which are future and of things which are not seen. It requires this exercise to be in a state of peculiar activity when we are called upon to act, under the impression of these future and unseen things, in opposition to present feelings and present interests, and in circumstances, it may be, in which this has to be done by great exertion and great personal sacrifice. When a man does thus resist the strongest inducements of present things, and sacrifices the strongest personal feelings, propensities, and interests, under simple impressions of things which are future and unseen; and when he exhibits in his

whole deportment a character guided by these impressions, to the overcoming of present feelings and personal interests whenever they happen to interfere with each other, this is to live by faith, and this is to add to his faith virtue.

Such, in a remarkable degree, was the conduct of Noah. Warned of God that the world was to be destroyed by water, and instructed to prepare an ark for the preservation of his household, he promptly commenced this formidable undertaking, and persevered in it through a long course of years with unshrinking steadiness. During this protracted period he had not only to undergo much severe labour, but, in the prosecution of it, must have withdrawn himself from many engagements, and denied himself many indulgences which present feelings and interests would have rendered highly desirable. Besides all this, we must suppose that he had to encounter, day after day, the derision and insults of those around him, added, most probably, to the earnest remonstrances of such as called themselves his friends against wasting his life in so unprofitable a labour. But these insults, privations, and remonstrances were alike disregarded by this distinguished man of faith, while he

endured as seeing Him who is invisible, and persevered in his work under the firm and undeviating conviction that what God had said he would certainly perform. Thus does he exhibit a wonderful example of that character which is founded upon and maintained by faith; and thus has he left us a striking pattern of acting on his faith with unshrinking determination and fortitude, in opposition to every impulse from present things; or, in the language of the apostle, of adding to his faith virtue.

And thus will it be with every one who really lives under the power of faith, that is, who feels upon his mind the due influence of the truths which he believes respecting things future and unseen. This wondrous principle, when cultivated as the regulating power in the whole character, elevates the man above present feelings, and carries him into a region where new objects are presented to his view, and pursuits of a new and superior order engage his attention and meet his enlarged desires. He is raised to "Mount Zion, the city of the living God, to an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; to God the judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the

new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." Thence returning to the humble concerns of the present world, and all his engagements among perishing things, he feels their unsatisfying character, and learns to pass through them under the habitual impression that this is not his rest, nor here his portion. Giving all diligence to add to his faith virtue, it will be his endeavour, by earnest meditation and prayer, to keep the impression of these truths habitually before his view, so that they may alike influence the habits of his mind, and show this influence in every part of his conduct. The sublime conceptions produced on the mind of such a man respecting the character of God will be peculiarly powerful when contemplating him as he is revealed in his Son. In that great message of mercy and of peace he has been taught to seek his only hope of reconciliation to God, as well as his only means of making progress in the Divine life. Acting under the powerful influence of these great objects of faith, he will derive from them a continual and lively motive to love and new obedience; knowing that "he is not his own, but bought with a

price," and that he is under the most powerful obligations to live, not to himself, but to Him who died for him and rose again. Thus cultivating with anxious care an immediate feeling of the character and perfections of God, the man of faith seeks to keep the impression habitually before him as the directing principle of his life, and to have every emotion and every desire, and, consequently, every part of his conduct, regulated by a sense of the Divine will. All this important process of moral discipline, we must repeat, is closely connected with an exercise of the mind, of which every one must be conscious who really performs it. This consists, as we have seen, in a strong and habitual direction of the thoughts to those truths which are the objects of faith, so that their power shall enter into every feeling of the mind. At first the exercise may require an effort, and habitual watchfulness may be necessary to prevent the distracting influence of the things of sense. But, like every habit, it becomes easier by repetition and perseverance, until, under the influence of a power that is not in man, it settles down into the uniform, consistent conduct of one who endures as seeing Him who is in-

visible; and, amid the cares, anxieties, and distractions of life, gives all diligence to add to his faith virtue.

That discipline of the mind which thus brings it under the habitual influence of the truths which are the objects of faith has well received from the apostle the name of fortitude or virtue; for a high degree of moral courage is required for commencing it, and a high tone of moral determination is necessary for carrying it forward with effect. The first great step towards it is that most difficult of all exercises of the mind which consists of seriously looking within. It is easy to investigate doctrines and to weigh evidences; and there is a delightful sense of intellectual vigour in detecting error, and exposing sophistry, and demonstrating the triumph of truth. It is comparatively easy also, and it is delightful to a regulated mind, to rise above the events of ordinary life, and to ascend, in exalted contemplation, to those higher regions, where shine forth in a peculiar manner the Divine perfections; to luxuriate amid the wonders of creation, the wonders of Providence, and, it may be also, the mysteries of grace. But, after the mind has been disciplined to these

high pursuits, a more difficult exercise remains, and that is to look within, and determinedly to press the question respecting our own moral condition, and how far we are under the influence of the truths which we profess to believe. It is to search out the very worst concerning ourselves, and steadily to contemplate the truth so discovered in all its important bearings upon our prospects for eternity. Do I believe the omiscience and omnipresence of Him who is not only the witness of my conduct, but who tries even the thoughts of my heart by the high and holy standard of his law? then is my moral condition within such as will bear the inspection of that eye. Do I believe in the solemnities of a coming judgment, in which strict account shall be required, and the secrets of all hearts revealed? When my whole moral history is then displayed, and this account required of me, what shall I answer? Such a course of rigid scrutiny is the first great step in that moral process in which consists the health of the soul. When a man has determinedly nerved himself for the work, and has resolved that nothing shall shake him from his stern and rigid accomplishment, this is to add to his faith virtue.

II. That this discipline of the mind, so essential to the health of every moral being, may be conducted upon right principles, it is necessary to pay minute attention to the truth and soundness of those opinions which are thus received as objects of faith and adopted as regulating principles in the character. Therefore, continues the apostle, to your faith and virtue add *Knowledge*. This is a consideration of the utmost importance, which, though it may be recognised in theory, is less attended to in practice than it ought to be. Whatever is received as the object of faith must first be presented to the mind as the object of knowledge; that is, it must be received only upon full examination, and upon such evidence as is sufficient to convince the understanding of its truth. Without this the professed belief must be either some vague generality unworthy of the character of truth, or some vision of the mind itself which leads only to enthusiasm; it is not faith.

On this subject various errors are committed, but all of them are of serious moment. One of the most common, perhaps, is indifference. Men who do not profess to believe the great truths relating to things not seen are at no pains

to study and examine them. With what eager attention do we find them applying to interesting questions in politics, trade, or science; seeking intensely after accurate knowledge, and directing all the energies of their mind towards arriving at the whole truth. But with what coolness do they apply to those inquiries which most of all concern them. In these they are satisfied with some vague and general notions, which, perhaps, they have been taught in their youth, or which they have adopted from others without feeling the supreme importance of making themselves fully acquainted with the truth; of forming distinct and clear opinions, and of perceiving distinctly the grounds on which these opinions are formed; of being satisfied whether their belief is consistent with truth, and whether it embraces the whole truth on those great questions in which are involved their hopes and prospects for a life that is to come.

Others affect to disbelieve these great truths, and to consider them, perhaps, as the superstitions of vulgar minds; and they seem to think it a proof of superior understanding to treat them with contempt or even with ridicule. Do we ask such persons for some account of that long,

and laborious, and serious course of inquiry by which they have arrived at this conclusion on a question of such momentous importance, we must not press them too closely for an answer. We shall find that they have scarcely examined them at all. They have allowed their minds to be carried away by some trivial objection or some fanciful sophism; and truths which received the cordial assent of Newton, and of many others distinguished by understandings of the highest order, are often dismissed by the most frivolous minds as altogether unworthy of belief. This affectation of skepticism is as contemptible as it is melancholy. It is not the result of calm investigation, but the rash decision of a distorted and prejudiced mind, which is turned aside by its own partial views, widely at variance with sound inquiry, or which, misled by its moral condition, has argued itself into the disbelief of what it wishes not to be true. For, in many who have become the victims of vain and sophistical opinions, the will evidently takes the lead in the mental process, and opinions are seized upon with avidity and embraced as truth which have recommended themselves to previously existing inclinations of the heart. This

is a principle in the philosophy of human nature of most intense and solemn interest. For when the desires of the heart have once departed from a full approbation of the purity of the Divine law, the course is easy by which the mind frames for itself a system in accordance with its own disordered inclinations, and, after a certain process, comes to rest in that system as truth. In both cases the unbelief arises not from deficiency of evidence, but from a total want of that condition of the mind without which the best evidence has no power; "If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

There are persons of a third class who, professing a sincere love for the truth, wander from it by their own speculations, and by neglecting that calm and deliberate application of the mind which is required for adding to their faith knowledge. It is thus that, in all ages, men have deluded themselves and led others astray by putting vague conceptions in the place of truth. To every one who would preserve himself from such delusions the great and solemn object of inquiry ought to be, upon what ground his opinions have been formed; have they been deduced

from a full and candid investigation? and do they rest on such evidence as is sufficent to satisfy a sound understanding that they are true? We have an interesting but melancholy picture of human nature when we endeavour to trace the principles by which minds of a serious character are influenced in thus departing from the simplicity of the truth. In some it would appear to arise from a love of singularity, or a desire of appearing wiser than their neighbours; in others from an ambition to be wise above what is written, accompanied generally with a restless activity of mind and vividness of imagination, while there has been very little cultivation of the judgment. The peculiarity in the actual mental condition of such persons is, that they look only to one view of a question. Having formed their opinions, probably on slight and feeble grounds, their whole ingenuity is directed to finding arguments in support of them instead of rigidly examining their truth; and they do not allow themselves to consider fairly the objections, or the views and principles which are opposed to their own. This habit of the mind is usually accompanied with a high confidence in its own powers and a contempt

for those who differ; and the persons who are under its influence generally become, in a great measure, inaccessible to argument, and almost unsusceptible of the force of facts and considerations which are opposed to their favourite views. This arises from the habit of directing their attention entirely to one view of a subject or to one side of a question, while they put away from them all that is opposed to it. For when false opinions have once been allowed to fasten on the mind, the evil is not confined to the particular dogma which is embraced, but an injury has been done to the mental economy, which is apt to continue, or even to increase, and to carry the individual more and more deeply into error and delusion. When a man of a certain activity of mind and energy of character has thus framed for himself a system differing in some prominent manner from the established opinions of those around him, the facility is equally remarkable with which he finds zealous proselytes. These appear, in general, to be influenced by principles similar to those which have been referred to. There is a feeling of intellectual superiority in appearing to think more deeply or more acutely than others;

in pursuing discoveries beyond the reach of ordinary minds; in standing, with the enlightened few, apart from the multitude, who are content to tread the beaten path which their fathers trod before them. Such a feeling influences the judgment in a manner which will not be admitted by those who most strongly manifest its power; it does so chiefly by a misdirection of the attention, that is, by leading them to consider only their favourite system, without paying any regard to the considerations which might show it to be fallacious.

For preserving from all such perversions of the understanding, and that pernicious influence on the whole moral economy which follows, the only security is in a close attention to the apostle's exhortation, that to faith be added knowledge. For this purpose the utmost care must be habitually exercised that the mind be calmly and steadily directed to an examination of the truth, and the utmost anxiety felt to prevent it from wandering into partial views or speculations guided by favourite fancies. Such is the discipline of a mind which seeks the truth in the love of it; and in the prosecution of its inquiries, conducted with humility and candour,

it is encouraged to look for an influence from Heaven which will preserve it from error, and prove to it strength, and light, and wisdom.

Though it thus appears that all true faith must be founded on knowledge, there is a peculiar propriety and beauty in the order in which the mental operations are stated by the apostle; first faith, then virtue, and then knowledge. For the first step in this great mental process is that frame or disposition of mind in which it is open to receive truth in simplicity and candour; to take a full view of all its parts, and to give full weight to all its evidences; and with an earnest determination to apply it to all those purposes which it ought to answer in the regulation of the whole character. When, with such a disposition of mind, the attention is directed to a diligent inquiry after the particular truths, the individual is in that state of discipline in which he is most likely to prosecute the momentous inquiry with success. He is so according to the established laws of the mind, by which such a sincere and candid love of truth naturally leads to the discovery of it in every department of knowledge. But, besides this, in the search after Divine truth a special di-

rection is promised to the sincere and humble mind. This appears to be the condition so often referred to in the Scriptures as receiving the truth "as a little child;" and it appears to be that which is intended by our Lord when he says, "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrines whether they be of God." Such a man enters on the great inquiry with a deep feeling of its momentous importance, and a sincere and simple desire to discover the whole truth; and he adds to this an earnest determination to press home each truth to all its consequences on his own moral condition; to take it as the guide of his life, and the regulating principle in the moral economy of his heart and of his mind; this is he who adds to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge.

The mental attributes which have been referred to in the preceding observations, consisting of faith, virtue, and knowledge, may be considered as those which form the foundation of Christian character; but they are the foundation only, not the real structure of which that character consists. From the consideration of them, therefore, we are naturally led to that influence

which they ought to produce upon the moral feelings of the mind and the regulation of the whole character and conduct, without which knowledge is vain and faith is barren. This most important part of the subject is divided by the apostle into two branches; the one relating to the moral condition of the individual himself, consisting of temperance, patience, and godliness; the other having respect to his conduct to his fellow-men, in brotherly kindness and charity. All these qualities are required to be in constant and harmonious operation to constitute a healthy moral condition; and there is either self-deception, or a pretension of what is not really felt, when there is the appearance or profession of some of them without the harmony of the whole. Though a man may show much conduct having the characters of brotherly kindness and charity, there is a radical error in the mental economy if these are not founded upon faith and knowledge, and accompanied by temperance, patience, and godliness. And, whatever display there may be of knowledge, these are but empty names unless they are accompanied by temperance and patience, and lead to brotherly kindness and charity.

III. Therefore, continues the apostle, as the first great result of your faith, virtue, and knowledge, add *Temperance*.

In ascertaining the precise meaning of such an expression as this, derived from an ancient language, our proper course appears to be to refer to the meaning affixed to it by ancient writers who wrote in the same language. When we do so in regard to this expression, we find that the ancient writers on moral science attached great importance to a distinction which they made between temperance and continence. By continence they expressed the mental condition of a man who has irregular desires or inclinations, but does not yield to the gratification of them; by temperance the condition of him whose desires and inclinations themselves are under due regulation and control. When we assume this, therefore, as the ancient and precise meaning of the term, a subject is opened to us of great extent and supreme importance; the discipline of the heart. It is most appropriately placed where it stands in the enumeration of moral qualities before us, as the first step in that great moral process in which consists the health of the soul. Faith, virtue, and

knowledge are the means; and these constitute mental exercises which may be called intellectual. Brotherly kindness and charity, again, express attributes of character in a man's conduct towards his fellow-men. But between these there is placed a class of moral qualities, in which consists his own sound condition as a moral being, and on which depends the aspect in which he is viewed in the sight of Him who "looketh on the heart;" these are enumerated by the apostle under the heads of temperance, patience, and godliness. Among the three classes of qualities, however, there is a close and most important relation. Faith, virtue, and knowledge, we have seen, are connected with processes of the mind over which we have a certain degree of voluntary power, and in the due exercise of them much depends upon this power being exerted in a steady and persevering manner. The result of this is to bring us under the agency of certain truths relating to things not seen, which have a direct tendency, under Divine influence, to produce most important effects upon the moral condition of our own minds and hearts. When this great end has been accomplished, a certain conduct and character fol-

low, not by any distinct and separate effort, but as a natural and indispensable consequence : the tree being made good, the fruit will be good; the fountain being purified, the water will be pure.

The consideration of temperance, therefore, leads us to a subject of the deepest importance, the regulation of the heart; the cultivation of a pure and healthy state of the desires, affections, and dispositions of the mind, those principles within from which our external conduct and character proceed. "Keep thy heart," says an inspired writer, "with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

The subject must be one of supreme importance in the estimation of every man who feels what that is which constitutes a state of moral purity in the eye of God. Man can judge of man by his external character alone, but "the Lord looketh on the heart;" and there may be much of irregular desire, unsubdued passion, and impure imagination within, which are not allowed to show themselves in the conduct. There are various principles by which this may be accounted for. In restraining the conduct of men, much is done by the influence of hu-

man laws, much by a regard to health and interest, and much more still by our regard to the opinions of other men, our desire of their approbation and esteem, our fear of their contempt, indignation, or anger; very much by a regard to character, a principle of most extensive operation with all descriptions and classes of men. There may be even a certain operation of conscience, or a conviction of what is morally right and wrong, contending with an unsound inclination within and restraining the outward conduct, while the desire is still cherished, and the envious passion or impure imagination still holds its place in the heart. But, if we really believe that every desire and imagination of the heart is open to the eye of God, we cannot for a moment suppose that this can be in his estimation a sound moral condition. To constitute moral purity, the heart must be pure; the desires and inclinations of the mind, and our affections or dispositions towards God and towards man must, equally with our external conduct, be regulated by the indications of conscience, and by a supreme regard to the Divine will. The habitual direction of the thoughts should be such as recognises the inspection of infinite purity.

When the Psalmist, accordingly, prays the Eternal One to scrutinize minutely his moral condition, it is by saying, "Search me and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

But a mind which is not the slave either of impure desire or malignant passion may be devoted to pursuits which relate only to present things; to wealth, to power, to distinction; or may be allowed to waste itself in the mere frivolities and trifles of the passing hour. A sound condition of the heart and of the mind requires not only the absence of unsound and irregular emotions, but the careful culture of those which are worthy of our high destiny as immortal beings. It leads us to seek after spiritual blessings and moral acquirements; to "set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth;" it calls us to the cultivation of kind and benevolent feelings towards men, and of love, submission, and devotedness towards God; of a habitual desire to feel the impression of his presence, and to have every action of life and every desire and emotion of the mind regulated by the sense of his holiness and purity. It leads

us to direct our minds, with a suitable degree of attention, to the various duties and responsibilities which belong to the particular situation in which we are placed, and the means and opportunities of usefulness which are committed to us; our high responsibilities as parents and as children, as masters or servants, as subjects, as neighbours and friends, as possessed of talents which ought to be devoted to the glory of God, or of wealth in regard to which we must render to him a strict account of our stewardship: and, finally, it leads us to feel all the deep responsibility of that culture of the soul which alone can qualify and prepare it for the enjoyment of God.

The cultivation of a state of mind which feels as it ought such impressions as these, is closely connected with a most important principle in our mental constitution, the power which we have over the regulation and direction of our thoughts. We feel that we possess such a power, however imperfectly we may exercise it. We can direct the thoughts to any subject we please; we can continue them intensely directed to it, so as to follow out the train of thinking to which it gives rise; and we can vary or dis-

miss it at our will. But this requires a certain effort, especially in those who have been little accustomed to close and serious thinking. Without this effort we leave the mind to be occupied only with passing events, or to frame for its own amusement vain delusions and phantoms of the imagination no better than dreams, and as unprofitable. The due control and regulation of this power over our thoughts lie at the foundation of all true mental culture, and there is nothing that makes a more essential difference between one man and another than a due regulation of the thoughts and the subjects to which they are habitually directed. In all men, indeed, there are various subjects to which the thoughts must be directed in the ordinary concerns of life; and these must occupy a great degree of attention in persons who may differ widely from each other in the regulation of the mind. But there are, to all, seasons of leisure from these concerns, in which the mind seeks relief in some other occupation. It is then that a man may read in his own thoughts both his intellectual and his moral condition; and if he then attend to the habits of his mind with an earnest desire to know the truth, he will find a monitor within which will never deceive him.

It is true, indeed, that a due regulation of the thoughts does not alone constitute a sound moral condition; but they are closely and immediately connected. Correct and pure moral emotion towards God, and a pure and healthy state of moral feeling in our own mental discipline in general, are conditions of the mind over which we have not a direct control; that is, we cannot call them up at our will. But, by the constitution of the mind, they are the natural result of certain truths, and they are called forth by a proper direction of the attention to those truths, so that their natural effects may be produced upon the moral feelings. In making this statement we lose not sight of the important fact that the influence of the Spirit of God is required to bring home these truths with effect to a mind which has never felt their power. But we abuse this important doctrine when we talk of it in a manner which turns aside our view from the power which we possess over our own minds, and the deep and solemn responsibility which attaches to every man in the due exercise of it; the deep guilt which may be incurred by a neglect of adequate attention to the truths which are calculated to influence the moral condition of

the mind, and, through it, to regulate the whole character. However much we want the inclination to exercise it, we feel that we have the power. We can direct our thoughts intensely and seriously to God; can contemplate his power and wisdom, his purity and his holiness, and all the solemnities of an eternal world and a judgment to come. We can consider seriously the various responsibilities and duties which belong to our own condition in life, and can rigidly question ourselves whether we are discharging them in a manner which will bear the light of an eternal day. We can in the same manner look within, and strictly question ourselves respecting our moral condition in the sight of Him who searches our hearts and knows our inmost thoughts. We can thus cherish trains of thinking which have a tendency to promote correct feelings of the mind, and we can avoid or banish such as have an opposite tendency. We can study with diligence the word of God, and contemplate deliberately and carefully the various important truths which are there disclosed to us, and their tendencies both for the regulation of our minds and the guidance of our conduct. This process of the mind, indeed, requires a steady and per-

severing effort, and unceasing watchfulness; and every one who seriously enters upon the great undertaking will feel continually his own weakness and his need of a power that is not in himself. But, while he humbly and earnestly seeks for this almighty power to enlighten his darkness, and, in his weakness, to give strength, let him not forget the part which is his own; let him not lose sight of the full import of the apostle's exhortation, calling upon him to "give all diligence," that to his faith, virtue, and knowledge he may add temperance.

IV. From the whole mental condition which has been referred to in the preceding observations, another naturally arises, which, in fact, is nearly allied to it; to temperance must be added *Patience*. This, considered as a quality of individual character, seems to imply a state of mind which may be viewed in its important influence both in reference to God and to our relations to our fellow-men. In reference to God, it implies not only submission to, but a cordial acquiescence in, the dispensations of his providence, as parts of a great system carried forward by infinite wisdom, and calculated to an-

swer important purposes in his great scheme of moral government. It leads us thus to rest in the absolute conviction that the whole economy of Providence is one great and magnificent system of design, and order, and harmony. The mental tranquillity arising from this conviction will be felt both in relation to our own concerns and to those which are going on in the world around us. In regard to the former, it leads us to rest in a sense of our being in the hand of a Father, infinite in wisdom as in goodness and mercy, who has appointed us the place we are to occupy in this state of moral discipline, and in the assurance that it is the one best suited to promote his great purposes and our own eternal good. We are thus taught to consider the peculiar duties which belong to our lot, and how we may best glorify God in it, rather than to compare it with the lot of others, and thus discover sources of discontent. Even the anxieties and troubles of life we are taught to regard with similar feelings, knowing that, if used as a means of moral discipline, they are conducive to our highest improvement; that tribulation, viewed and improved in this manner, "worketh patience, and patience experience,

and experience hope; and that this hope maketh not ashamed." The peace arising from this condition of the mind should also be experienced in reference to the events which are taking place in the world around us. Though "the heathen should rage, and the people imagine a vain thing," it directs us to a hand which controls their movements; and, even when events assume their most alarming aspect, we are still led to contemplate the operation of that hand with humble confidence, and to rest in the assurance that "the Lord reigneth."

The mental condition which is referable to patience has also a most important relation to a man's intercourse with his fellow-men. It is nearly synonymous with meekness, and closely allied to humility, and all the graces of character which spring from it. It leads a man to form a moderate estimate of his own rights and pretensions, and to take the most enlarged estimate of the rights and feelings of other men. It leads him to be slow to take offence; to put the best construction on the conduct and motives of others; to seek peace, and often to submit to injuries rather than violate it. Such a disposition has its reward in itself; the man who pos-

sesses it passes quietly through life, borne far above all its lesser disturbances and evils by his habitual sense of those great concerns which relate to the life which is to come.

V. In this striking enumeration of the qualities of Christian character we have seen that temperance and patience relate to the internal moral condition of the man. But there is most appropriately placed in immediate connexion with them that mental exercise by which they are promoted and cherished. Faith, virtue, and knowledge are of no value unless they be productive of temperance and patience; but these essential qualities cannot be maintained in growth and progress without *Godliness*. Wherefore, says the apostle, to your temperance and patience add godliness.

We read in scripture of those who live without God in the world; that is, without any impression of his character, without any sense of his presence, without any regard to his law, without any gratitude for his goodness, and without any feeling of their dependance upon him both for mercy and for spiritual strength. We read of others who think of God as such a

one as themselves ; that is, bringing down his high and holy attributes to a conformity with their own degraded moral feelings. The state of mind here designated by the term godliness seems to be that which is opposed to both these conditions. It implies forming high and worthy conceptions of the Divine character, and habitually cherishing these as the regulating principle of our own moral condition. The attributes of God, indeed, are far above our full comprehension. They are higher than heaven ; what can we do ? they are deeper than hell ; what can we know ? the measure of them is longer than the earth and broader than the sea ; who, by searching, can find out God ? But from his works and from his word we can derive such knowledge of him as is sufficient for all the purposes of our guidance, direction, and comfort in this our state of moral discipline. From his works around us we trace his power and wisdom, and should learn to bow in humble adoration before him who called all things into being by his word, and maintains them all in undeviating harmony. From the moral impressions of our own minds, or, in other words, in the light of conscience, we may read his perfections

as a being of infinite holiness, and righteousness, and truth. All these impressions are confirmed and illustrated by his revealed word, where, in addition to those great and overwhelming attributes of his character, we learn his perfections as a God of love, long-suffering and slow to anger, not willing the death of a sinner, but that he turn from his wickedness and live. We learn the wondrous provision which he has made for the recovery of his lost creatures; and are led to throw ourselves before his throne of mercy, seeking his pardon and his grace to help us in every time of need; seeking that strength which he has promised to every one that asks it to carry us forward in our state of trial and discipline, and to prepare and purify us for the immediate enjoyment of himself.

He who feels upon his mind such impressions of the Divine character, and cultivates them in a manner in any degree adequate to their supreme importance, will naturally seek after intercourse with God; will desire to feel the influence of his continual presence, and to cherish the sense of his holiness as the regulating principle of the character, and even of the desires and imaginations of the heart. He will

find increasing delight in contemplating the perfections of God. He will desire to commit himself, with filial confidence and love, to the disposal of his heavenly Father, and to make his will the habitual rule of his whole conduct; he will look to his mercy as the only ground of safety, and to his grace as the only source of spiritual strength and the only means of progress in those great concerns which pertain to an immortal being. Thus will he "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

The disposition of mind which we have thus considered as being included under the term godliness may be the habitual exercise of the duly regulated mind. But there are certain special means by which it is encouraged and promoted; and the chief of these is prayer. Not that the Eternal Omniscient One requires to be informed either of our wants or our desires. All our necessities are better known to him than they are to ourselves; and the most secret thoughts and inclinations of the heart are naked and open before him. But he has specially appointed the exercise of prayer as a means of

communication with himself, and through which he is pleased to dispense the blessings of his grace. In addition to these considerations, the exercise of prayer is calculated to bring a special and peculiar benefit to ourselves. In the midst of our ordinary engagements in life, indeed, we may elevate the soul to God; but, surrounded by the distractions of external things, this must be done in a partial and unsatisfactory manner. Our feeble and imperfect nature, so much under the influence of the objects of sense, requires every possible aid to enable us to feel the due impression of the things of faith. It requires us to withdraw from external things, and in solitude and silence, and by solemn acts of devotion, to bring ourselves, as it were, into the immediate presence of God. There is a power in the mind by which it thus brings down upon itself an influence from the inner sanctuary, a special impression of the perfections of that incomprehensible One, who is thus disclosed to us as if by his more immediate presence. We realize his omniscient eye, and stand in awe under the truth that he understandeth our thoughts afar off. We feel the impression of his holiness, and bow beneath the sense of

our own depravity and guilt. We feel the influence of his love, and throw ourselves upon his mercy. We commit ourselves to his grace to supply all our wants out of his fulness; to conduct us in safety through the dangers, the difficulties, and the evils of life, and to carry us forward in the course which leads to eternal peace. Would we seek to feel our own moral condition, and to fix the deep impression of an inquiry of such eternal importance, we cannot use a means of greater efficacy than putting it into words in the presence of Him to whom it is better known than it is to ourselves. Is there any mental or moral habit which we feel to have acquired a mastery that puts in peril the safety of the soul, we cannot assail it in a more efficient manner than by fully confessing it before Him who seeth in secret, and asking from him a might which alone is able to rescue us from its power. Such is the province and such the efficacy of prayer. It maintains our intercourse with things which are not seen. It is the life, the strength, and the nourishment of the soul; and it will be diligently cultivated, not as a mere duty to be performed, but as a means of spiritual life, by every one who feels the deep import

of the truth that all the graces of the Christian character must be founded upon and supported by godliness.

VI. The mental condition which has been referred to in the preceding observations does not waste itself in monkish solitude or in the exercise of sublime contemplation. It tends at once to lead the man who is the subject of it to the relation in which he stands to his fellow-men, and to the various important duties which belong to the situation in which he is placed. While it leads him to seek after purity of heart, it also produces a character and conduct calculated to promote the good of others, the happiness and comfort of all those with whom he may be brought into contact in his passage through this state of trial and discipline. Following out this as the natural or necessary result of a healthy moral condition within, the apostle next inculcates that to temperance, patience, and godliness is to be added *Brotherly-kindness*. This seems to include the highest exercise of all those affections which bind man to his fellow-men; leading us to feel towards each other as brethren, to study the wants of others,

to enter into their feelings, and, in as far as we have power, to relieve their distresses. It tends to promote a conduct distinguished not only by the highest degree of integrity, but by habitual complaisance, sympathy, and kindness; and this is not to be regulated by the condition of men as to the things of this world, but by the high and broad principle that, whatever may be their lot as to external things, they are the children of the same Almighty Father with ourselves, inheriting the same nature, possessed of the same feelings, and soon to enter on the same state of external existence, when all the distinctions which exist in this world shall cease for ever. It thus leads us to bring ourselves, as it were, to the same rank and the same situation with them, and, with a brotherly interest, to view their wants and their feelings as if they were our own. The principles of conduct which arise from this interchange of tender affections are applicable to every situation of life, and to all those exercises of justice, benevolence, forbearance, and friendship which may be called forth by our various relations to our fellow-men. It sets aside those artificial distinctions by which, on the principles of the world,

men are kept at such a distance from each other; and it sets aside, what is more powerful still, the principle of selfishness, by which men are made so acutely alive to everything that concerns their own wants and their own feelings, and so cool in what relates to the wants and the feelings of others. It goes farther still; for, according to the sublime maxims of the gospel, it teaches us even to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them who despitefully use us. The benevolence of the gospel thus raises us above the highest principles to which we are led by the mere feeling of human kindness; it leads to do good to the evil and the unthankful; and this is impressed upon us by the highest of all motives, the imitation of Him who is the giver of all good. Such a character is exemplified, in the most striking manner, in the whole life of Him who, for us and for our salvation, humbled himself and became a man of sorrows. He humbled himself that he might mingle with mankind; that he might enter into their wants; that he might know their feelings; that, having suffered being tempted, he might succour them that are tempted. He has left us an example that we should

follow his steps; and he has left us precise instructions respecting the course by which this may be done, and the objects whom he has specially committed to our care. These are the hungry, the naked, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner. He has even left us the solemn intimation that, at the last and great day of account, our moral condition will be estimated by the actual influence which has been habitually manifested on our relations to our fellow-men, as done from a principle of love to him and of devotedness to his service. While we retire, therefore, from the influence of external things, and devote ourselves to the high undertaking which relates to the culture of the moral being within; while we feel the supreme importance of cultivating temperance, patience, and godliness as the qualities which are essential to our own moral condition, let us constantly bear in mind that the direct tendency of these is to lead us forth to our fellow-men, to seek them in their hour of need, to minister to their wants, to relieve their distresses, to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the wanderer, to sooth the wounded spirit. For this exalted exercise wealth is not necessary; the humblest of those

who breathe the spirit of the Redeemer may show much kindness and do much good to others as humble as themselves.

But it is not in the abodes of poverty and deprivation alone that the kindly feelings of the heart may be called into exercise. In every situation of life we may find openings for deeds of kindness. In every rank and in every relation this disposition will manifest itself by gentleness and forbearance, by leading us to study the feelings and consult the wants and the desires of others, whether superiors, equals, or dependants; by repressing selfishness, and by producing the habit of placing ourselves in the situation of others, so as to make their feelings and circumstances our own. Hence arise the sympathies and exertions of Christian friendship, and the habit of sacrificing personal feelings and selfish interests, with all that interchange of the kindly affections which diffuses happiness and comfort wherever it is exercised. To all such exercise of those affections which bind man to his fellow-men, the great principle of Christian duty gives a strength, stability, and permanence which never can arise from any lower source. For much active benevolence

may and does arise from motives of an inferior kind, and from certain feelings of our nature from which there results an actual and peculiar enjoyment in the discharge of offices of sympathy and kindness. Much real enjoyment arises from doing good to those whom we esteem and love, and from relieving the distresses of the virtuous and worthy. There is an actual reward in the return of gratitude, and in sentiments of respect and affection from those whom we have made to feel a weight of obligation which they cannot expect to repay. There is something more directly personal or selfish in exciting the love and gratitude of those who may be able to return our kindness, and feel the most anxious desire to do so; and, in regard to cases of both descriptions, there is a separate and peculiar enjoyment, or of actual reward, in the approbation of other men, especially to those whom we respect, and in the general sentiments of regard and esteem which follow the man who makes himself known by deeds of disinterested and active benevolence. But the great principle of Christian duty carries us farther and higher; it calls upon us to do good to the evil and the unthankful, and to

do it in secret, looking not for any return, whether of good offices, approbation, or gratitude, but simply to the love and devotedness which we owe to Him who is the Giver of all good. This, accordingly, is the important distinction so strikingly referred to in the word of God, "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye; do not even the publicans the same? And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thanks have ye? for sinners also do even the same. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth the rain on the just and on the unjust." Such is the great principle, enjoined by the apostle, of brotherly kindness. That it may hold its true place in the economy of a mind which is under the influence of faith, it must arise from no partial or selfish motives, no mere exercise of incidental feeling, nothing that has respect either to our own emotions or to the opinions of other men. It must be a steady, consistent principle, pure in its origin

and uniform in its influence; it must be founded on faith and knowledge, and cherished by temperance, patience, and godliness; the willing service of filial affection; a steady, persevering course of active usefulness, influenced simply by the high spirit of love and devotedness to him who has redeemed us to God by his blood.

Go, then, ye who profess to serve this Divine Master, go and follow his steps. Deny yourselves the selfish indulgences of those who know no better portion; go forth in search of those who are in want of your kindness; search out the hungry, the naked, the sick, the stranger, the prisoner; visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction. Realize that eye which follows you in all your wanderings among the abodes of misery, disease, and suffering. Realize continually that high principle of active usefulness which flows from affection to him who died for you; and realize continually the value which he will assign to such a course of active exertion, not, indeed, as a ground of acceptance, but as a test of devotedness and love; "Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

VII. The mere exercise of deeds of benevolence and kindness does not alone constitute that character towards our fellow-men which is the true and proper result of a sound moral condition. That state of the mind and of the heart which is founded on faith and cherished by temperance, patience, and godliness, will extend its influence over all those feelings and affections which refer to others in every relation of life. The condition of mind which thus arises appears to constitute that which the apostle inculcates when to brotherly-kindness he calls upon us to add *Charity*. This must be considered as claiming our deep and serious attention, when it is here given as the finishing quality of that character which is founded upon and maintained by an habitual principle of devotedness to God. The feelings which are included under it are enumerated by the apostle Paul, and are by him referred to the following heads. (1 Cor. xiii.)

1. *It suffereth long, and is kind.* It exercises candour, indulgence, and forbearance in regard to the conduct of others, entering into their feelings with gentleness and kindness, and ma-

king every allowance for the circumstances in which they are placed, and the motives and feelings by which they are influenced. This disposition prevents us from hastily assigning unworthy motives or bad intentions; it induces us to take the most favourable view that we possibly can of the conduct of other men, and, even when appearances are against them, to endeavour anxiously to discover favourable views and palliating circumstances. It thus leads us to be slow to take offence, to be unwilling to consider injuries as intended, to be above taking offence at trifles, and, under real injuries, to be easily conciliated and ready to forgive. This temperament of the mind is strikingly contrasted with one which we find so common in the world—envious, suspicious, and censorious—ready to be offended by trifles, to construe accidental circumstances into intended insults, and to impute to others bad intentions on the most frivolous grounds. Such a disposition is a source of wretchedness to those who are under its power, and of unhappiness to all with whom they are connected; and we cannot survey the distress which arises from ill-regulated temper without perceiving how much the pres-

ent happiness of men would be increased by the exercise of that charity which suffereth long and is kind.

The kindness which is here associated with long-suffering seems to be distinct from the exercises of benevolence referred to under the former division of the subject. It appears to imply more particularly a tender regard to the feelings of others, which makes us studious to avoid wounding them by jealousies and suspicions, by peevishness or fretfulness, and by allowing trifles to ruffle the temper and disturb the social harmony. Many who are not deficient in deeds of benevolence or friendship are apt to forget how much the exercise of true kindness consists in gentleness, meekness, and tender consideration for the feelings of others; and it is melancholy to observe how much real unhappiness often exists in families and in communities which would be effectually prevented by the Christian grace of kindness.

2. *Charity envieth not.* Envy looks with displeasure on the real or imagined happiness of others, leading men to compare their own situation with that of their neighbours, and to

covet circumstances in their lot which seem to render it happier than their own. It is thus founded on discontent, a state of mind decidedly opposed to sound Christian feeling; for this teaches us to consider our lot, in all its circumstances, as assigned to us by the Great Disposer of all things, and precisely adapted to the place which it is his pleasure we shall hold in this state of moral discipline. Envy, therefore, is not only injurious to a sound state of feeling towards other men, but is also destructive of our own moral culture; for it tends to withdraw our attention from our actual condition as responsible beings, leading us to forget, amid fruitless longings after imagined good, the high responsibilities which pertain to our own condition, and thus waste the precious hours which are given us to prepare for the life which is to come. Christian charity, therefore, teaches us to rejoice in the good of others; in their happiness, their honour, and their reputation. It is opposed to detraction, and leads us to allow to other men, though rivals or even enemies, all praise, honour, and reputation that are justly due to them; to avoid everything calculated to injure their good name or to lower them in the

public estimation, and to defend them against such attempts when we find them made by others.

3. In the exercise of that correct state of moral feeling which we owe to other men, we are very much impeded by the false and exaggerated views which we are apt to form of our own importance, and the undue weight which we attach to our own feelings. In opposition to this, Christian charity leads us to view ourselves with humility, and this naturally induces us to view others with indulgence, candour, and justice. Accordingly, the apostle adds, "*Charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up.*" The immediate and natural result of this humble, calm, and considerate view of our own condition and our own feelings in reference to those of other men, is a general propriety and decorum of behaviour towards them; "*doth not behave itself unseemly.*" A man acting under the influence of this law of Christian charity conducts himself with a correct and judicious regard to the situation of life in which he is placed; he does not push himself into notice or prefer himself to others; but is, in all circumstances

of life, to his superiors respectful, to his equals accommodating and courteous, to his inferiors kind, gentle, and considerate. He is thus preserved from those improprieties and absurdities of conduct into which men are led by pride and vanity, putting themselves out of their proper place, and losing sight of the proprieties of conduct adapted to their situation; involving themselves with matters in which they have no concern; and, by a disposition restless, meddling, and conceited, at once destroying their own peace and injuring the peace of others.

4. The propensity in human nature which has the chief influence in separating man from man, and disturbing all the harmonies of life, is *Selfishness*. By one device or another men are ever seeking to promote their own interest, their own gratification, their own ease, reputation, or distinction. Hence arise the jealousies, suspicions, and envies with which they view those who are likely to interfere with them in their favourite pursuits, and those who in similar pursuits have been more fortunate than themselves. Christian charity strikes at the root of this propensity, so wide in its extent, so destructive in

its influence; "*charity seeketh not her own.*" It would lead us into a field far too extensive for our present purpose were we to endeavour to trace the manner in which selfishness enters into all our pursuits, and the extent to which it interferes with that spirit of kindness to our fellow-men to which so much importance is attached in the great practical rules of the gospel of Christ. Every one has only to watch minutely his own conduct to discover in how many instances a regard to his own interest, comfort, or distinction interferes with the kindly feelings and the offices of kindness which he owes to others; how often he is prevented by mere indolence, or a selfish regard to his own ease, from doing good in various ways which would cost him nothing but a little exertion; how often a regard to his own feelings interferes with what is due to the feelings of other men; and how different the conduct of all of us would very often be did we deliberately place ourselves in the situation of others, and calmly view their circumstances and their feelings, as if they were in our situation and we in theirs. There is not, in the high requirements of the gospel, a principle of more essential im-

portance than this. When our Lord says, "if any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself," he calls us not to mortifications or austerities calculated only to inflict suffering on ourselves; but he calls us, and calls us "as one having authority," to renounce all those selfish indulgences and selfish humours, and that pursuit of selfish interest, which interfere with the zealous and extensive exertions for the comfort and the good of others, to which he attaches so important a place as a test of our affection to him and our devotedness to his service. In such a course he has left us a bright example, and he calls us to follow his steps. He calls us to enter with kindly interest into the wants and feelings of our brethren, and, in many instances, to sacrifice our own interest, ease, indulgence, and inclinations to theirs. By the high sanction of his own example we are exhorted to have the same mind in us which was also in him; and this exhortation is enforced by the solemn denunciation, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

5. The mind that is under the influence of Christian charity "*is not easily provoked, and*

it thinketh no evil." Like its Divine Master, it is meek and lowly, not apt to be offended by trifles, and, under real injuries, patient and forgiving. It is slow and cautious in forming an unfavourable opinion of others, or in imputing to them bad designs or bad intentions; and, consequently, it is not apt, as so many are, to conjure up to itself imaginary injuries and imaginary enemies. That mental condition which we usually distinguish by the name meekness, quietness, and magnanimity of mind, is equally conducive to a man's own comfort and to the sound state of his moral feelings towards other men. It carries with it its own reward in the tranquillity which it brings to us in our passage through this scene of tumult and strife. While it is peculiarly favourable to the culture of the moral being, it tends also to preserve from numerous evils, mortifications, and distractions to which the opposite character exposes. "Learn of me," says our Lord, "for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls."

6. This catalogue of Christian graces is strikingly concluded by a reference to that great

and broad principle of Christian feeling which lies, in a great measure, at the foundation of the whole: "*charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.*" Viewing himself and all around him as immortal beings in their passage to an eternal world, the man of charity has for his first and great anxiety respecting his fellow-men to see them walking in the truth; to find among them the culture of those qualities which mark the healthy condition of the moral being, and its preparation for the solemn realities of an eternal world. When brought into comparison with those great concerns, all present things sink into insignificance. He can derive, therefore, no satisfaction from moral evil, even though it may contribute to his own benefit, as, in the transactions of life, it may often do. For how often may it happen that we derive advantage from the misconduct of rivals, and may be tempted to feel a secret satisfaction at the loss of character on the part of those who, perhaps, have stood in the way of our favourite pursuits, either of interest, reputation, or comfort. How often might we turn to our advantage the quarrels of others, and thus be tempted to foster rather than to heed the feelings from

which they arose. But whatever personal benefit we might derive from it, the man of charity cannot view with satisfaction what is displeasing to God or destructive of the moral condition of an immortal being, and he will gladly sacrifice his own present feelings and present advantage for the high achievement of rescuing a soul from death. In this great object he will exert himself to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the vicious, to win even his enemies by deeds of kindness, to prevent differences, to heal divisions, and to bring together as brethren those who have assumed the attitude of hatred and defiance. Feeling in himself all the supreme importance of "things not seen," it will be his habitual and earnest desire to promote among all around him a character and conduct governed by a sense of the overwhelming interest of a life that is to come.

7. The enumeration of those qualities of the mind which constitute Christian charity is recapitulated by the apostle in four expressions of a most comprehensive character; "*it beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things.*" The first of

these expressions would have been more properly rendered, "covereth all things;" and, when they are taken together, they display in a few words the great peculiarities of that conduct and character towards our fellow-men which ought to arise out of the gospel of Christ. The man who is under its influence seeks to cover the faults of other men, to defend them against misrepresentation of calumny, and, in all his relations towards men, to treat them with meekness, forbearance, and kindness. He is disposed to form the most favourable opinion of others that circumstances will at all allow; and, when personally injured, to give the utmost possible weight to concessions or explanations; to be easily conciliated and ready to forgive. This justice and indulgence which he applies to the conduct of men he extends also to their opinions, giving to their sentiments and statements a fair, calm, and attentive hearing, and judging them with impartiality and candour. Farther, in regard to the character of other men, he does not, without great cause, depart from the favourable opinion of what may be done for their improvement, but takes advantage of every hopeful circumstance, and is thereby en-

couraged to persevere in his efforts to do them good. In the prosecution of this high design he puts up with much waywardness, absurdity, and folly on the part of those whom he seeks to benefit, not considering his own comfort or honour, but the great object which he has in view in the good of others; and in this he perseveres with constancy, however unpromising the circumstances may appear as to his ultimate success, or however unproductive of comfort to himself in the prosecution of them.

Such, then, is the exercise of the kindly feelings towards our fellow-men which is represented as indispensable to that character which is founded on faith, virtue, and knowledge, and cherished by temperance, patience, and godliness. The importance attached to it in the word of God cannot be represented more strikingly than in the words of the apostle, where he teaches us that without it knowledge is vain and faith is barren; and that all acquirements and endowments, however high their pretensions, are but an empty sound, which can never profit. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. . . . . And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is Charity."

The whole subject, thus briefly and imperfectly delineated, is full of important instruction, which, in an especial manner, claims the attention of two descriptions of persons.

I. Are there those who maintain that the doctrines of the Gospel are unfavourable to morality, because they offer acceptance in the sight of God to faith alone? Let such put away from them those flimsy and distorted conceptions of Christian truth by which they voluntarily delude themselves. Let them look at the record of God in all its harmony and consistency, in all its extent and all its purity. Let them see it requiring a higher tone of morals than ever

was contemplated in the most exalted of human standards; let them see it enjoining as an indispensable part of Christian morality all those dispositions and actions towards our fellow-men which are included under the comprehensive terms of brotherly kindness and charity. Let them contemplate it as extending its high and pure requirements even to the thoughts, desires, and inclinations of the heart, and demanding purity within. Let them consider calmly and deliberately these important truths, and say, as candid and honest men, what estimate they form of the morality of the gospel.

II. Let those who profess to be under the influence of the truths which are the objects of faith see that they truly feel and really manifest their power. It is easy to assume the phraseology of religion; it is easy to acquire a knowledge of its doctrines, and to argue acutely and ingeniously on points of faith. It is not difficult to practise with decorum its rites and forms, to observe its ordinances, and to show all that zeal for the externals of religion by which a man acquires a certain character among his fellow-men. It is easy, also, to those who

have the means, and it is gratifying to feelings which exist in the generality of mankind, to practise much benevolence, and to show much real concern for alleviating the distresses of other men. But much of all this, it is to be feared, may and does exist, while there is none of that discipline of the heart without which knowledge is vain and faith an empty name. It is to the heart that the eye of Him looketh who cannot be deceived by external things; and it is when a man retires from all consideration of the opinions of his fellow-men, and looks seriously into those processes of his mind which are open to the Divine inspection; it is then that he may discover his own moral condition, and may learn, if he seriously wishes to know the solemn truth, what he really is in the eye of God. Let him inquire what is the habitual current of his thoughts; what the prevailing object of his desires; what the governing motives of his conduct; what place among them have the things of time, and what the things of eternity; what influence have the motives and principles of the world, and what the great principle of devotedness to God. It is thus that he may learn those "secrets of the heart" which

at present are hidden from all human eyes, but will be fully revealed at the great day of account, and rigidly tried by the pure and holy standard of the law of God. The important truth, therefore, cannot be too often or too seriously contemplated by every one who feels the overwhelming interest of eternal things, that, whatever be his faith and whatever his knowledge; whatever be his character in the eye of man, and whatever his real and active usefulness to others, there is a distinct and most serious object of attention which immediately concerns the safety of the soul; and this is, that, while he cultivates faith and knowledge, he shall give all diligence to add temperance, patience, and godliness. Without these, while he greatly benefits others, he may inflict irreparable injury on himself; amid many good works, he may neglect that discipline of the heart in which is involved his own safety as a moral being.

But, while this first and great concern receives the attention which it demands from every immortal being, let it never be forgotten that there is a fatal error in the mental economy unless the fruits are manifest in every part of the conduct and character. In this respect the high

principle of Christian faith ought to maintain its superiority over all other motives and principles, however honourable these may be in themselves. The great question to those who profess to be under its power is, "What do ye more than others?" Are there men who, from kindness of natural feeling, or those principles of honour and integrity which prevail in the world, perform many deeds of exalted integrity, benevolence, or kindness? the man of faith must do more. Are there those who, on such principles, show much mildness, forbearance, and forgiveness? the man of faith must do more. It is vain to talk of faith and godliness while an inconsistent conduct, a contracted selfishness, or an unsubdued temper gives the empty profession the lie. When the great principle really exists within, it will be manifest by its fruits; and when it is thus exhibited in all its consistency and all its power, it is then that it challenges the conviction of those who oppose themselves, and compels them to acknowledge its reality and its truth, and to "glorify our Father who is in heaven."

THE CULTURE AND DISCIPLINE OF THE MIND.

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CULTURE AND DISCIPLINE

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THE MIND.

If we are asked what constitutes the greatest difference between one man and another, considered either as intellectual or as moral beings, we cannot hesitate to answer, the culture and the discipline of the mind. Under the influence of those external things by which we are so habitually occupied, our consideration is too little directed to the wondrous essence of which we are conscious within. But when we turn our serious attention to the economy of the mind, we perceive that it is capable of a variety of processes, of the most remarkable and most important nature. We find, also, that we can exert a voluntary power over these processes, by which we control, direct, and regulate them at our will; and that, when we do

not exert this power, the mind is left to the influence of external impressions or casual trains of association, often unprofitable and often frivolous. We thus discover that the mind is the subject of culture and of discipline, which, when duly exercised, must produce the most important results on our condition as rational and moral beings; and that the exercise of them involves a responsibility of the most solemn kind, which no man can possibly put away from him.

Youth is the season peculiarly adapted for this great undertaking, while the attention is not yet engrossed by the distractions of active life, and while those injurious habits have not yet been formed which are so often fatal to the health of the mind. Allow me, then, to direct your earnest attention to this high concern, the highest and the most important that can engage your anxious care. While life is opening before you with all its fair prospects and all its promises of happiness, learn to feel the supreme interest of the discipline of the mind; study the remarkable power which you can exercise over its habits of attention and its trains of thought; and cultivate a sense of the deep importance of

exercising this power according to the principles of wisdom and of virtue.

You are at present eagerly engaged in prosecuting useful and important acquirements in various branches of knowledge, but all that is furnished by early study gives only the elements for forming the mind, and for gradually training it to that intellectual vigour and moral discipline by which it may be prepared for farther and greater pursuits. While, therefore, you prosecute with ardour the various departments of science, you will remember that a higher and more extended object is still before you. You will feel the necessity of rising above the details of individual sciences, to those results to which all science ought to combine in leading us, the culture of understanding itself, and the practical application of those rules by which the mind may be directed towards the discovery of truth, and by which the truth so discovered may be applied to the actual duties and responsibilities of life. You will learn to estimate the value of that greatest of all acquirements, a well-regulated mind, and to study with anxious care what those qualities are which constitute

such a mind, and what are the particular pursuits, and the mode of conducting them, which are best adapted for the high attainment. You will learn to estimate the benefits which arise from such a regulation of the mind; to see how, in every inquiry, it tends to conduct us to truth; how it leads the mind to apply itself to various pursuits with a degree of attention adapted to their real value, and to follow out the inductions of each to its last and highest object, the culture of the moral being.

Amid the most zealous prosecution of knowledge, you will learn to press forward to those great and ultimate truths by which science ought to lead us to the Omnipotent and Eternal Cause. Philosophy fails of its noblest object if it does not lead us to God; and, whatever may be its pretensions, that is unworthy of the name of science which professes to trace the sequences of nature, and yet fails to discover, as if marked by a sunbeam, the mighty hand which arranged them all; which fails to bow in humble adoration before the power and wisdom, the harmony and beauty, which pervade all the works of Him who is Eternal.

Judging upon these principles, we are taught

to feel that life has a value beyond the mere acquirement of knowledge and the mere prosecution of our own happiness. This value is found in those nobler pursuits which qualify us for promoting the good of others, and in those acquirements by which we learn to become masters of ourselves. It is to cultivate the intellectual part of the attainment of truth, and to train the moral being for the solemn purposes of life, when life is viewed in its relation to a life which is to come. These exalted pursuits are not more conducive to the great objects which are presented to us as moral and responsible beings, than they are calculated to promote our own happiness and peace. Constituted as we are, indeed, and placed in certain relations to objects of sense and to other sentient beings, we are in some degree under the influence of external things. But the powers which wield the destiny of our happiness are chiefly within. It is there that we trace the elements of those noble faculties which, if duly cultivated, secure at once our usefulness and our happiness; and it is there that we find the germes of those vulture passions whose dominion is worse than Eastern bondage, and under whose relentless

tyranny a man who is master of the world may be himself a slave. In the conquest of these consists the highest dignity of our nature, and in the control and subjugation of them is our only solid peace.

Among the phenomena presented by human character, none will strike you as more remarkable than the various objects which men propose to themselves in life. In all, a certain vision of happiness seems to float over the scene; but how various are the courses by which the phantom is pursued, and how many enter upon the pursuit without proposing to themselves any definite course at all. They never seem distinctly to put to themselves the question in what the imagined enjoyment consists, and what are the elements by which it is constituted. One expects to find it in wealth, another in power, a third in rank, a fourth in fame, while not a few are found to seek it in a mere round of excitement, perishing with the hour which gave it birth. Thus a large proportion of mankind pass through life pursuing an imagined good which too often eludes their grasp, or which, even after it has been attained,

is found incapable of giving satisfaction. They live upon the opinions of other men, and are thus left at the mercy of a thousand external circumstances, by which the good they had so long pursued is blasted in the enjoyment. They enter upon life without forming any definite conception of what the great business of life ought to be; and, when they perceive that it is drawing to a close, they look back with astonishment to find that it has passed over them like a dream; that they cannot say for what purpose they have lived, or, perhaps, are compelled to acknowledge that they have lived in vain.

But life presents another aspect when we view it as a scene of moral discipline; when we look not at its pains and its pleasures, but its high duties and its solemn responsibilities; and at the discipline of the heart, from which springs a true and solid happiness which external circumstances cannot destroy. All then is defined and clear. The object is definite, and the way to it is marked as by a light from heaven. Each step that is gained is felt to be a real and solid acquirement, and each imparts a sense of moral health, which strengthens every

principle within for farther progress. I know that I carry your best feelings along with me when I thus call your attention to that course of life which alone is adapted to its real and solemn importance, which alone is worthy of those powers of our intellectual and moral nature with which we have been endowed by Him who formed us. In the culture of these is involved not only a duty and a responsibility, but a source of the purest and the most refined enjoyment. For there is a power which is calculated to carry a man through life without being the sport and the victim of every change that flits across the scene; this power resides in a sound moral discipline and a well-regulated mind.

The foundation of all mental discipline, in the words of an eminent writer,* consists in the "power of mastering the mind." It is in having the intellectual processes under due regulation and control, and being thus able to direct them, upon sound and steady principles, to the acquisition of useful knowledge and the discovery of truth. Here we are, in the first place, reminded of that remarkable power which we possess over the succession of our thoughts.

* M. Degerando.

We can direct the thoughts to any subject we please, and can keep them directed to it with steady and continuous attention. In the due culture of this power consists a point in mental discipline of primary and essential importance. By the neglect of such culture, the mind is allowed to run to waste amid the trifles of the passing hour, or is left the sport of waking dreams and vain delusions entirely unworthy of its high destiny. There is not a greater source of difference between one man and another than in the manner in which they exercise this power over the succession of the thoughts, and in the subjects to which these are habitually directed. It is a mental exercise which lies at the foundation of the whole moral condition. He who, in early life, seriously enters upon it, under a sense of its supreme importance; who trains himself to habits of close and connected thinking, and exerts a strict control over the subjects to which his thoughts are habitually directed; leading them to such as are really worthy of his regard, and banishing all such as are of a frivolous, impure, or degrading character; this is he who is pursuing the highest of all earthly acquirements,

the culture of the understanding and the discipline of the heart. This due regulation and stern control of the processes of the mind is, indeed, the foundation of all that is high and excellent in the formation of character. He who does not earnestly exercise it, but who allows his mind to wander as it may be led by its own incidental images or casual associations, or by the influence of external things to which he is continually exposed, endangers his highest interests both as an intellectual and a moral being. "Keep thy heart with all diligence," says the sacred writer, "for out of it are the issues of life."

Now it cannot be too anxiously borne in mind that this great attainment is, in a remarkable degree, under the influence of habit. Each step that we take in the prosecution of it will facilitate our farther progress; and every day that passes over us without making it the object of earnest attention, the acquirement becomes the more difficult and the more uncertain, and a period at length arrives when no power exists in the mind capable of correcting the disorder which habit has fixed in the mental economy. The frivolous mind may then

continue frivolous to the last, amusing itself with trifles, or creating for itself fictions of the fancy no better than dreams, and as unprofitable: the distorted mind may continue to the last eagerly pursuing some favourite dogma, while it is departing farther and farther from truth; and the vitiated and corrupted mind may continue to the last the slave of its impure and degrading passions. Such is the power and such the result of mental habits; and let us ever bear in mind how such habits are formed. They arise out of individual acts of the mind; and we have not the means of determining what number of such acts are necessary for forming the habits, and at what period these may acquire a mastery which shall peril the highest interests of the mind. We cannot determine how many instances of frivolity may constitute the permanently frivolous mind; how many trains of impurity may constitute the permanently corrupted mind; or what degree of inattention to the diligent culture of the powers within may be fatal to the best interests of the man, both as an intellectual and a moral being. Hence the supreme importance of cultivating in early life the mastery of the mind, and of watching with

earnest attention the trains of thought which we encourage there, as we cannot determine at what period a habit may be formed, the influence of which shall be permanent and irremediable.

When we take this extended view of that which constitutes sound intellectual culture, we perceive that it does not consist in the mere acquirement of knowledge, however extensive that knowledge may be; for this may be an exercise of memory alone. We feel that there is a culture of the higher powers of the mind of greater difficulty and greater importance far, without which knowledge is vain. This is a due regulation of the various mental faculties themselves, so that each may perform its proper office upon the knowledge we have acquired; that the various powers within may observe a healthy relation towards each other; and that from the whole may result a due influence upon our motives and principles of action as moral and responsible beings. Without attention to these considerations, a man may accumulate a mass of knowledge which yields him no real advantage; he may have gone the round of the sciences, commonly so called, while he has

made no progress in that higher department, the knowledge of himself.

The great principle of self-government, therefore, consists in calling ourselves to account both for what we know and for what we do, and for the discipline which we exercise over the processes of our minds. It consists in questioning ourselves rigidly what progress we are making in important acquirements; what are the subjects which chiefly occupy our attention; whether these are such as are really of adequate value, or whether, amid undue devotedness to some favourite pursuit, others of higher importance are overlooked and forgotten; or whether, under a habit of listless vacuity and inactivity of mind, we may be allowing the best of our days to creep on without eager attention to any solid acquirement at all. It consists in questioning ourselves in the same manner what opinions we have formed, and upon what grounds we have formed them; whether they have been received from others without examining for ourselves, or after a slight and partial examination, directed, it may be, by some previously formed prejudice, or whether they have been deduced from a full and fair examination

of all the facts which ought to be taken into the inquiry. It consists, finally, in scrutinizing our mental habits, our moral feelings, and our principles of action; what are the subjects to which our thoughts are most habitually directed? what the motives which chiefly influence our conduct? what the great objects which we propose to ourselves in life? what place among these have the principles of selfish indulgence, personal distinction, or mere human applause? and what place have those exalted principles which spring from a higher source, and rise to that elevation from which they spring, a spirit of devotedness to Him who made us, and views and feelings which point to an existence beyond the grave?

In regard to the discipline of the mind as well as the external conduct, the rule proposed by Bishop Butler is of high efficacy and universal application. It consists in simply asking ourselves, before proceeding to any act or any course of action, "Is this I am going to do right, or is it wrong; is it good, or is it evil?" This rule is so simple and so obvious, that most people, probably, think they act upon it; but this they will find has been done in a very

loose and inefficient manner when they come in every instance distinctly to put the question and distinctly to answer it. The practice of doing so in every step of life will grow into a habit of mental discipline of vital importance to the highest interests of the moral being. It ought to be exercised, not in regard to our actions alone, but also in regard to the processes of the mind, the direction of the attention, and the regulation of the thoughts. These will be found to be as much under the influence of a voluntary power as are our external actions; and the due and habitual exercise of this power is, in both cases, of equal and indispensable importance to a sound moral condition.

A leading defect in many characters, and one which lies at the foundation of much and serious imperfection, both intellectual and moral, is the want of this habit of self-inspection and self-interrogation. This deficiency is not confined to the listless and vacant mind, which allows life to glide over it amid frivolities and waking dreams. It may be found in those who are intensely and actively occupied with external things. It may be found alike in the laborious student, who is eager in the pursuit of

knowledge, and in the active man of the world, who, engrossed with the affairs of the living scene which is moving around him, has neglected the wondrous scene that is passing within; has never cultivated the rigid scrutiny of his own intellectual and moral temperament. The truth, indeed, seems to be, that, after a certain period of life, few have the hardihood thus sternly to look within. For a high degree of moral courage is required to face the disclosure which awaits the mind when it is thus turned inward upon itself; a disclosure, it may be, of the result of years and years that have passed over it in listless inactivity, which yields nothing to reflection but an empty void; or in the eager pursuit of objects which are seen to be worthless; or in the acquirement of habits which are felt to be destructive of the health of the mind; the disclosure, it may be, of important duties neglected and important pursuits overlooked, and the conviction that life is drawing to a close while its great business is yet to begin. Few have moral courage to meet this disclosure; and, when it is met with an attention in some degree adequate to its supreme interest, the impressions which it yields are en-

countered by the force of confirmed moral habits, which seem to claim every faculty and feeling of the mind as theirs by hopeless bondage. Hence the supreme importance of cultivating in early life the habit of looking within; the practice of rigidly questioning ourselves as to what we are and what we are doing; what are our mental habits; what are our plans and prospects for life, and what influence over the whole of our moral discipline have the solemn realities of a life which is to come. What I have called the power of mastering the mind consists, if I may use a strong mode of expression, in compelling it to listen to such a course of interrogation as this, and compelling it to return distinct and definite answers. Each hour that, in early life, is spent in such an exercise, is fraught with results of greater value than aught that the world can give. The exercise is gradually confirmed into a mental habit; and, under the influence of a power from on high, the consequences are likely to be such as reach beyond the narrow limits of time, and extend into eternal existence.

The regulated condition of the mind which

has been the subject of these observations is applicable to every situation in which a man can be placed in life, and leads him to feel his way through its various pursuits and responsibilities in a manner adapted to the requirements of each of them. But it more properly belongs to the aim of my present suggestions to mark its influence upon the progress of the mind itself; and in this respect I may allude, in a very few words, to its remarkable bearing upon three leading objects of mental discipline, the acquisition of knowledge, the formation of opinions, and the culture of those moral emotions of the heart which are the last and highest object to every responsible being.

I. A regulated condition of the mind contributes, in a most material degree, to our progress in knowledge. In this respect it is, in the first place, the source of a quality which ought to be carefully cultivated in early life, which I may call *mental activity*. This consists of an eager, inquiring state of mind, ever on the watch for information from any source from which it can be drawn, and ever anxious to make its information more correct and more extensive. It

leads to a habit of observation, by which we learn to derive knowledge from all that is passing around us. It teaches us, farther, to direct this mental activity in a proper manner, by selecting such objects as are really deserving of our regard, and by directing the mind to them with a steady and continuous attention, so that we may acquire a full and connected knowledge of all the facts and their relations to each other, and thus prepare them for the conclusions or general principles which they are calculated to yield. It thus tends to preserve us from frivolous pursuits by leading us to a steady culture of those which are of real importance, and with an eager and persevering attention adapted to their true value. For, among many pursuits, no man can excel in all; and the foundation of eminence is a due selection, and a leading direction of the mind to those which are thus selected. You will be at no loss to discover around you remarkable and instructive examples of the effects produced by the want of this sound discipline of the mind. One you will find dreaming through life, without directing himself with energy to any object; a second wasting his powers, perhaps of a superior or-

der, in a desultory application to a variety of studies, without excelling in one; while a third devotes himself with eagerness and zeal to some favourite pursuit, neglecting others which really merit his chief regard.

Closely connected with the habit of mental activity is the habit of reflection on the relations of the facts which are acquired, leading us to observe their connexions and the conclusions which they yield; and the habit of association, referring facts to others with which they bear an analogy, and to principles or opinions which they tend to confirm, modify, or overturn. It teaches us also to trace among facts the relation of cause and effect, and to deduce from them general conclusions or general principles, the last and main object of science. Now the whole of this course of mental activity is productive not only of intellectual improvement, but of the highest mental enjoyment, while the frivolous or ill-regulated mind is not only fatal to improvement, but is a burden to itself, and, as life advances, becomes its own tormentor. Let, then, the eager desire for knowledge carry you above those pursuits which waste the best years of so many around you, and leave them,

even to the close of their days, the victims of frivolity still.

In regard to this important object, there are some suggestions of a practical nature which I may offer in a few words.

(1.) Carefully select the subjects to which your attention is to be more particularly directed; and, having selected them from a deliberate conviction of their importance, prosecute them steadily and perseveringly, upon a regular and connected plan. To a certain extent, the mind derives a feeling of relief from varying its occupations, but this requires to be done with caution; for a most essential means of progress in intellectual pursuits is to have one leading object, to which the energies of the mind are directed in a special manner. This ought not only to be cultivated by regular periods of study, but should be kept, as it were, habitually before the mind, so as to prove a ready subject of thought, to which the attention may be directed during intervals of disengagement from any direct pursuit. The mind cannot be unoccupied, and to all there are many such periods of disengagement; it is a most important part of mental discipline to cultivate

the habit of having ready and accessible objects to which the mind may then be directed in a profitable manner. This is a practice of great value in the regulation of the mind itself, and calculated to prevent habits which are destructive of a sound mental condition; and it is also a source of much real intellectual progress. For a subject which is habitually contemplated in this manner often expands itself before the mind with comparatively little effort, developing views and principles which had probably escaped us in periods of more regular study.

(2.) Cultivate the habit of intense attention to whatever subject is before you, whether in reading, observation, or in listening to the instruction of others; and check the first tendency either to a listless inactivity of mind, or to allowing it to be led astray by visions of the imagination, or by incidental trains of association foreign to the subject. Sound intellectual progress depends less upon protracted and laborious study than on the habit of close, steady, and continued attention. It is from it that evidence derives its power to produce conviction; it is by means of it that any subject of inquiry is brought before the mind in a manner calcu

lated to yield sound views and accurate conclusions; and the deficiency of it is the source of those partial and distorted impressions by which men, even of considerable endowments, often wander so widely from truth. This habit, of what I may call active attention, will carry you through every pursuit in a manner calculated to ensure the utmost advantage from it. Does a subject occur to you either in reading, conversation, or reflection, in which you feel that your knowledge is deficient, you will promptly go in search of the information that is wanting. In perusing a work, your attention will be acutely and distinctly directed to the information to be derived from it, the train of investigation or of reasoning which the author pursues, the authenticity of his facts, the validity of his arguments, the accuracy of his conclusions, his style of writing, his character as an observer, and all the circumstances which may enable you to decide whether you can trust to him as a guide in the branch of knowledge of which he treats A discourse to which you have occasion to listen may possibly be uninteresting, and may promise little improvement, and you may feel the disposition to allow the mind to wander

from it; but in such circumstances there should never be forgotten the paramount importance of the discipline of the mind itself, and the danger of anything that might break in upon the habit of attention. In the pursuits of science, this habit of the mind leads to sound knowledge and correct conclusions; in the affairs of ordinary life, it is the source of promptitude, united to discretion and prudence; in the highest concerns of a man as a moral being, it brings him under the influence of those important truths which are calculated to guide and regulate his moral emotions, and his whole character and conduct in life. Such is the power of the habit of attention; it is not saying too much of it to affirm that it lies at the foundation of the whole character.

(3.) Cultivate the object of correct observation, association, and reflection. This is nearly connected with the former: it leads us to be acutely awake to all that is passing around us, and to be ever on the watch for information from every source from which we can draw it. It teaches us to treasure up knowledge in an orderly and accessible form, by associating new facts or principles with others to which they

bear a relation or analogy, and with principles or objects of inquiry which they tend to illustrate. It leads us, farther, to trace among facts the relations which they bear to each other, and the new principles and conclusions to which they conduct us; and thus, by a process of the mind itself, to deduce new and important truths from a simple series of facts which are before us. This condition of the mind is the source of what we call Observing and Inventive Genius, which lie at the foundation of all philosophical eminence. Observing Genius leads the philosopher not only to acquire facts, but to arrange, generalize, and reflect upon them in such a manner as to deduce from them new truths, which the mere collector of facts does not discover. It was by reflections produced by the fall of an apple from a tree that Newton was led to those principles which regulate the movement of the great bodies of the universe. Inventive Genius, again, leads him not only to observe and arrange facts when they are presented to him, but to go in search of them. In doing so, he takes for his guides certain conjectures or assumptions which have arisen out of his own intense contemplation of

the subject, and then commences a course of observations or experiments calculated to ascertain their truth. This habit of the mind, therefore, is peculiarly applicable to the experimental sciences, and in these has often been the source of the most important discoveries.

(4.) Study to acquire the habit of improving fragments of time. A very little experience will convince you of the great importance of this rule, and will show you how much may be done by the careful improvement of portions of time which are too often entirely lost. They are lost partly from the want of that habitual mental activity which has been so often referred to, and partly from not cultivating the habit of having some leading object always, as it were, in progress, and keeping it so before the mind that the attention may at any time be directed to it in a profitable manner.

(5.) In the culture of the mental habits which have been referred to much benefit is derived from writing, provided it be done in a distinct, methodical manner, and in your own words. In history, for example, it may consist of chronological tables, with the addition of your own reflections on the relations of the

events, and the displays of character which they present to us; in other subjects, of abstracts of important facts, statements, and arguments, with your own observations. Such a practice tends to fix the attention, and to cultivate habits of correct thinking and correct expression.

The points of mental discipline which have been thus briefly referred to you will find at first to require an exertion and a steady effort to exercise that power which you possess over the processes of the mind. If left to itself, the mind is very apt to become listless, or to be led away into incidental trains of images which have arisen within itself, or have been suggested by some trivial source of association. But you find that you have the power to control its movements; to direct it into trains of thought of a useful and important kind, and to check the first risings of such as are of an opposite character. The effort, made with steadiness and perseverance, will become easier the longer it is pursued, and will be gradually formed into a habit, the important habit of a well-regulated mind.

According to a common mode of expression, we attach great importance to that which we call *genius*, and which we consider as an original quality of particular minds. But what is of greater value than that which often receives the name of genius is not to be considered as an original quality, but a habit of the mind. It is nothing more than intense mental activity, steadily directed to some leading pursuit. This important principle was well illustrated by Sir Charles Bell in his introductory address to his first course of lectures in Edinburgh, when he took occasion to allude to that distinguished physiologist and surgeon, Mr. John Hunter. Mr. Hunter, he said, had been called a man of genius, but he was disposed to take a different view of his character from that which is commonly expressed by that term. The great and leading feature in Mr. Hunter's character, he added, was, that he was steadily and eagerly devoted to his object, and that no change of external circumstances had the power, for one moment, of turning him aside from it. Was he in his study or in his dissecting-room, or mingling with men in the common occupations of life; was he at sea, shut up in a crowded trans-

port, or was he in the field of battle, with bullets flying and men dropping around him, one great object was steadily and habitually before him, and he never lost an opportunity of seizing upon everything that could in any way be made to bear upon it. This, call it by what name you will, is the source of all distinction. It is greatly assisted by education; but what I am anxious to impress upon you is, that it is not an original quality, but an acquired habit of the mind, and a habit which may be cultivated by every one who determinedly devotes himself to the high attainment.

II. The second great mental operation, in which is felt the value of a regulated mind, is the formation of opinions. Here various errors are committed, but all of them are of serious moment. There is a listless vacuity of mind which prevents it from being directed with attention or interest to the formation of defined opinions, even on subjects of supreme importance. There is a servility of mind which leaves it the slave of mere authority, without forming opinions for itself by personal inquiry. And there is a rude and reckless affectation of

mental independence or liberty of thinking which leads a man to despise authority, to aim at striking out for himself a system distinguished from the received opinions of those around him, led, it may be, by a love of singularity or the vanity of appearing wiser than his neighbours; or, perhaps, impelled by the condition of his moral feelings, to argue himself into the disbelief of what he wishes not to be true. From all such distortions of the understanding a regulated mental discipline tends to preserve us. It induces us to approach every subject with a sincere and humble desire for truth; to give its due influence to authority, without being blindly led by it; to give its due weight to every kind of evidence, without partial views or imperfect examination; and to direct the whole powers, not to favour, establish, or overturn particular opinions, but honestly and anxiously to discover what is truth.

This is a subject of intense and solemn interest. A slight attention to the philosophy of it will enable you to perceive its true bearings upon us as responsible beings; and how, on the highest of all subjects, a man may incur moral guilt in the formation of his opinions. Both as

intellectual and moral beings, the great agent by which we are acted upon is *truth*. Truth derives its power from evidence; and there are laws of evidence which, in their nature, are as absolute and immutable as the laws of physical relations. But for the operation of them a state of the mind itself is required; and without this, even the best evidence may be deprived of its power to produce conviction. For the result of evidence upon the mind depends on close and continued attention; and this is a voluntary process which every one may be able to perform. It is on this ground, therefore, that we hold a man to be responsible for his belief, and contend that he may incur deep moral guilt in his disbelief of truths which he has examined in a frivolous or prejudiced manner, or which, perhaps, he indulges in the miserable affectation of disbelieving without having examined them at all. The remarkable fact, indeed, appears to be, that the chief source of unbelief, on the greatest of all subjects, is generally to be found in a previous moral corruption of the mind. It arises from no defect of evidence, but from a state of mind on which the highest falls without power. This striking moral pro-

cess begins by a man renouncing the guidance of sound moral principle and the restraints of religious truth both on his conduct and on the discipline of his heart. The great truths which he thus violates are then repelled as intruders which disturb his mental tranquillity; and, from this stage in his downward progress, the career is short and the mental process simple by which he succeeds in driving the belief of them from his mind. Such is the wondrous economy of the human heart, and such is the history of many a man, who, after a certain course of moral degradation, has sought refuge in infidelity.

On the great questions of religious belief, therefore, allow me to suggest to you some considerations respecting the manner in which a well-regulated mind ought to approach this highest of all inquiries.

(1.) Beware of indifference; that is, of treating the subject in a light and careless manner; professing, it may be, a nominal acquiescence in certain truths, because you have been taught them in your infancy, or because they are the established creed of those with whom you are particularly connected. Study the subject for

yourselves; study it in a regular and connected manner, and let every step be a matter of close and serious personal inquiry. Study it under a deep sense of its supreme importance, and with an anxious desire that the opinions you form shall be consistent with truth, and that they shall embrace the whole truth; and, finally, study it with a devout reliance on a light and an influence from above, which are promised to the humble inquirer; a light which will conduct to the truth, and an influence which will fix that truth as a ruling principle in the whole economy of the heart. It is the part of a regulated mind not only to know the truths, but to know the grounds on which they are believed to be true; "to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in you." When the great elements of the Christian faith are thus studied in a manner adapted to their supreme importance, they are found to rest upon a chain of evidence which falls upon the mind with irresistible power. This evidence is addressed to us as rational and responsible beings; but its influence depends upon the attention which is directed to it, and this is a voluntary process of the mind which it is the solemn duty of every man to

perform. That the truths may exert their due influence upon the moral condition, they ought thus to be fixed in the understanding; for it is at once the source of true faith, and the best antidote to enthusiasm, that faith be founded in knowledge. But that this great purpose may be answered, the attention must be devoted not to the evidence alone; it must be extended, with the same anxious care, to the doctrines themselves. These are presented to the candid inquirer with a wondrous force of internal evidence, when he perceives their harmony with each other and their adaptation to the actual condition of man; and, to a mind thus prepared, they soon vindicate their claim to subjugate every emotion of the heart to their power, the power of immutable and eternal truth.

(2.) Acting upon these principles, you will learn to estimate, according to its real value, a display of character which, I fear, you may meet with in the intercourse of life. This is what I would call the cant of infidelity; the affectation of scoffing at sacred things by men who have never examined the subject, or never with a degree of attention at all adapted to its deep importance. The conduct of such per-

sons is not more melancholy in itself than it is at variance with every other principle worthy of a regulated mind. The following account of the mental condition, in a noted class of French infidels, is given by one who knew them well, and whose authority is entitled to the utmost confidence. "Vanity has a greater share in their disputes than conscience; they imagine that the singularity and boldness of the opinions which they maintain will give them the reputation of men of parts; by degrees they get into a habit of holding impious discourse, and, if their vanity be accompanied by a voluptuous life, their progress in that road is the swifter. . . . . They have made no deep examination; they have learned some few objections, which they are perpetually making a noise with; they speak from a principle of ostentation, and give themselves the lie in the time of danger."* Such is infidelity as described by one who had ample opportunity of knowing it, and such will it in general be found to be. I will not venture to maintain that it is impossible to find a man who has arrived at this conclusion after an extent of examination adapted to the su-

* Bayle's Dictionary.

preme importance of the subject, but I hesitate not to assert that it will be exceedingly difficult; and I believe it may be confidently stated as a fact, that calm and serious inquiry has almost invariably ended in conviction.

III. But I must leave this deeply important subject, and hasten to offer a very few remarks on the third of the topics to which I have alluded, the influence of a regulated mind on the moral emotions of the heart. In these consists the highest state of man, his soundness as a moral being; and there flow from them, by direct and natural sequence, all those affections and motives of action which guide his conduct to his fellow-men, and those nobler emotions still which raise the feeble and finite being to Him the infinite and eternal. In the culture of these are involved not only the chief dignity of our nature, and our prospects as moral and responsible beings, but also, in an equal degree, our present sound and solid happiness. They constitute that true wisdom, of which we are entitled to say, on the best of all authority, "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Here we are reminded of that remarkable principle which pervades the whole economy of the mind, the intimate relation which exists between the moral emotions and intellectual processes over which we have a direct and absolute control. As moral and responsible beings, the power by which we are acted upon is truth. But all truth must first be presented to the understanding; and being, by an appropriate process of examination, received into the mind, it is then, by a voluntary exercise of attention and reflection, to be applied in such a manner as to produce its proper influence on the moral emotions of the heart. It is thus that a beautiful harmony and consistency pervade the whole economy of the mind, evidently worthy of Him who made it; and it is thus that a solemn responsibility attaches to ourselves in regard to those emotions of the heart over which we have not a direct control. It is precisely the same principle to which I have already referred respecting the responsibility of man for his belief. He cannot believe as he wills by any direct effort of his mind, yet a deep responsibility attaches to him in the formation of his opinions; and he cannot call forth at his bidding the moral

emotions of the heart; but the deepest guilt may be involved in the absence of them; because, by an established economy of his mind, they arise out of processes of the understanding over which he has an absolute power, applied to truths which, under a higher influence, are calculated to exert a direct control over the moral emotions of the heart. This part of the mental constitution is worthy of the deepest attention of every one who appreciates that most essential of all pursuits, the culture of the moral feelings. It is by means of it that truth, which is received by a process of the understanding, is made to exert its power in controlling the tempests of the heart; it is by means of it that we can invite and cherish mental images and trains of thought, which tend directly to the highest purposes of our moral culture; and can banish those which have an opposite tendency, as enemies which would poison the springs of moral health and peril the safety of the moral being.

And what are the truths which, under a supreme influence, our intellectual nature is thus to use as the engines of a power to control and regulate the emotions of the heart? They are

those which refer to the attributes of God, and our relation to him as the creatures of his hand, moral, responsible, and immortal. They rest upon evidence so extensive and so varied, that its authority will be best appreciated by those who have made the greatest attainments in the laws of rigid inquiry. This evidence is above us, and within us, and around us. Every step that we take amid the wonders of creation without leads us to new discoveries of the power, and wisdom, and goodness of Him who called them into being by his word, and maintains them all in undeviating harmony. When we turn our attention within, we read in the moral impressions of our own minds, or, in other words, in the light of conscience, his attributes of holiness, and justice, and truth. And, meeting with difficulties in the book of natural religion, we have only to turn to the page of revelation, where all these difficulties are removed, and the Divine character is displayed with a harmony and consistency which carry conviction to every candid mind. We have there disclosed the wondrous provision which has been made by infinite wisdom and infinite mercy for the restoration of man from

his state of moral ruin, and a power adapted to his moral weakness, and a light to shine upon his moral darkness, and a code of ethics more high, more pure, and more extensive far, than ever was contemplated by the wisest of men. The whole is supported by a weight of evidence which fixes itself upon the mind with irresistible power, and, with a tone of authority, it calls our attention to all the responsibilities of life, and all the realities of a life which is to come.

Such are the truths which, as moral causes, are calculated to act upon the mind, and thus to control and regulate our emotions and our whole character as moral and responsible beings; and it is of the utmost consequence that we attend to the philosophy of that process by which they may be made to answer this great purpose, and without which it may be entirely lost to us, with all its important results. This is an exercise of attention and reflection over which every man feels that he has a voluntary control. The truths are endowed with certain tendencies which are as uniform as the operation of physical causes; but their actual efficiency is closely connected with this exercise of the mind itself; and it is thus that, by ignorance or in-

attention, a man may incur the deepest guilt in the want of that moral culture, the great agents of which are thus presented to him, and pressed upon his attention as a rational being. Now the truths to which I have thus referred are usually called objects of faith; and you will often find a distinction made between objects of reason and objects of faith, as if the latter were, in some respect, inferior to the former in their evidence and stability; but this is entirely without foundation. The truths which are the objects of faith are properly so called because they do not come under the cognizance of any of our senses; but they are as directly addressed to the understanding as the most obvious inductions of physical science; and they carry a weight of evidence as direct and incontrovertible to every mind which is open to its power. This evidence, indeed, is of a different character, but its strength and its authority are the same. The truths themselves are calculated to engage the highest powers of the mind; and the most exalted understanding that ever dwelt in human form will derive from them a new feeling of intellectual vigour and moral health, by which it shall wing its way to those regions

where shine forth in a peculiar manner the Divine perfections; and shall there prostrate these highest powers in devout and humble adoration of Him "who was, and who is, and who is to come." This, and nothing less than this, is true philosophy; for it is this alone that traces the phenomena of nature to their cause; it is this alone that takes within its grasp the whole range of truth, and places fairly and deliberately against the mere objects of sense those great realities which are the objects of faith.

Our highest concern as moral beings, therefore, being not with objects of sense, but with things future and objects unseen, to live, in a certain degree, under the influence of these is essential to a sound moral condition. But this requires an effort of the mind of a very peculiar nature. It requires that we cherish the habit of banishing for a time the power of sensible objects, and of raising the faculty of conception to an immediate contemplation and realizing impression of things and events which are the objects of faith. It requires that we cultivate the habit of referring every act of our life and every element of our character to the will of God; of treasuring up in the mind the

principles and maxims of his word, and of making them the subject of contemplation in such a manner that they may at all times promptly exert their power, both in the regulation of the conduct and the discipline of the heart. We have formerly alluded to the numerous intervals of disengagement of mind which are left to us even in the busiest life, and the great importance of having accessible subjects of thought to which the mind can then be directed in a profitable manner. It is in reference to such intervals that the sacred writer describes so beautifully the effect produced upon him when he sought refuge in the contemplation of the Divine character, and the impression which immediately followed of a sense of the Divine protection: "When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches, in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." The most exalted aspirations of the poet can ascend to nothing more sublime than this, at once pointing to the highest elevation to which the finite being can aspire to rise, and leading to some of the most important principles both in intellectual and moral science.

Let it, then, be your study in early life to cul-

tivate that sound condition of the mind by which its powers are not kept in bondage to the mere objects of sense, but are trained to the habit of bringing down upon it the habitual influence of the truths which are the objects of faith. Amid the collisions of active life on which you are about to enter, you will soon find yourselves in want of a safer guide than can be furnished by human wisdom; "you will require a higher incentive than human praise, a more exalted object than human ambition, a principle more fixed than human honour."* This object and this principle are to be found only in a devout and habitual sense of the homage which we owe to Him who made us, and in the habitual desire to make his word at once the rule of our conduct and the regulating principle of every emotion of the heart. Devote yourselves with eager enthusiasm to the high acquirements of science, but cultivate also that habit of the mind by which science shall continually lead you to the eternal Cause. And, while you are taught to follow the planet through the wondrous regularities of its movements, when you find the

* Lord Stanley's Rectorial Address at Glasgow; newspaper report.

comet, after being lost for a century, returning at the appointed period from the solitudes of its eccentric orbit; when you extend your view beyond the system in which we move, and penetrate into that field in which ten thousand other systems revolve around ten thousand other suns in ceaseless harmony, oh rest not in a cold recognition of the facts, but take one step and say, "These are thy wondrous works, thyself how wondrous;" and rest not here, but take yet another step, and recognise this Being as the witness of all your conduct, as the witness even of the moral condition of the heart; seek after purity of character, for you cannot go where you are not followed by that eye; aspire after purity of heart, for that eye extendeth even there; and, feeling your inability for this mighty undertaking, seek continually a power from God; a power which he alone can give; a power adapted to your utmost want, and which is promised to every one that asks it. In your progress through life, indeed, you will not fail to meet with those by whom this momentous truth is treated with derision, as the vision of fanaticism, unworthy of a philosophical mind. But never allow yourselves to be imposed upon by names;

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